TYLER

AM
1944
ty

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

TASTE AND TRENDS IN BEST SELLER FICTION 1930 - 1939

by

Bernice Mason Tyler

(B. S. in Education, Boston University, 1928)
(Master in Education, Boston University, 1934)

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
1944

AM
1944
ty

Approved

by

First Reader. Thomas R. Drather.

Professor of English

Second Reader. George M. Smith

Professor of English

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Chapter		Page
I	BEST SELLER LISTS DURING THE DECADE	1
II	EXTRANEOUS FACTORS INFLUENCING THE POPULARITY OF BOOKS	7
III	CRITICISM AND THE POPULARITY OF BOOKS	12
IV	OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCING BEST SELLER LISTS	19
V	POPULAR BOOKS A RECENT DEVELOPMENT	22
VI	BEST SELLERS AND LITERARY TASTE	24
VII	BEST SELLERS AND READING TASTE	26
VIII	WHY A PERSON READS - WHAT READING DOES TO HIM	36
IX	TYPES OF POPULAR BOOKS	40
X	THE BACKGROUND OF THE DECADE	43
XI	THE BACKGROUND REFLECTED IN POPULAR WRITING	49
XII	THE DOMINANT INFLUENCE OF THE DECADE	55
XIII	OTHER TRENDS OF THE DECADE	61
XIV	THE POPULAR BOOKS OF THE DECADE	65
	1930	66
	1931	74
	1932	80
	1933	87
	1934	97
	1935	105
	1936	113
	1937	126
	1938	132
	1939	137
XV	SUMMARY	147
	ABSTRACT	152
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	156

INTRODUCTION

Even a casual study of popular taste in fiction reveals that the reading public which buys best seller fiction is either an astonishingly small part of the total fiction reading public, but with a varied an catholic taste, or it is composed of a number of groups with different tastes. The latter premise is probably the more nearly correct of the two. It may be accepted as such with the additional observation that occasionally a book is written so universal in its appeal that the interests of these groups overlap and a "super" best seller is born. The elements which must be taken into account in any endeavor to determine the reasons for the individual popularity of books of fiction are complex, for a book of fiction may be read because of interest in its plot, or in its characterizations, or in its style, or for other reasons quite apart from the kind of life it depicts or the motives which actuate its characters. In spite of these difficulties a best seller list presents a challenge to interpretation. Wherein lies the magic quality of popularity which makes one of a dozen similar books a temporary favorite? How does the public decide on its reading? What part does salesmanship play in stimulating public demand? How much does a best seller owe to external circumstances? How much to intrinsic worth? What influence do the events of the times have in making a best seller? Are the events of the times reflected in best seller fiction? What does a reader want from his fiction?

It is with these questions that this discussion is concerned. If exact analysis or convincing conclusion is not possible due to the complexity of the elements which produce best sellers, the effort will not, however, have been in vain. Such an inquiry will serve to orient and crystallize the fragmentary notions concerning such best sellers which the advent of each best seller brings forth.

CHAPTER I

BEST SELLER LISTS DURING THE DECADE

A best seller may be defined[1] as " a book . . . . . whose sales are among the highest in its class . . . . " This definition does not, however, include any indication of time, and it is around that point that much of the discussion of the meaning of the term revolves. Does the definition imply that a book selling steadily since its publication, thus accumulating an impressive total of sales over a somewhat extensive period of time, is a best seller, or is the term descriptive of the book which leads in sales during a somewhat restricted period of time? An examination of best seller lists shows that they are regularly compiled weekly, monthly, and yearly, but seldom for a longer period of time. This brings one to the conclusion that the latter interpretation is the one commonly used in the book trade and accepted by the public at large. It is this interpretation of the term which is used in this discussion.

It has been pointed out[2] that if best seller lists were truly representative the leading volumes would be The Bible, the standard dictionaries, and Fannie Farmer's Boston Cook Book, for they are perenially the best selling books in the United States.

[1] Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language. (2nd. ed., unabridged; Springfield, Massachusetts: G and C Merriam Company, 1941).

[2] Time, XXXI (March 7, 1938), 74-75.

Following these are the newer books, the ephemeral favorites, which are for convenience sake called best sellers. The sales of these new books rise and fall with the tide of popular fancy, and periodic checks of their popularity disclose frequent dislocations and annihilations. The most widely used best seller lists of today exclude such books as cookbooks, dictionaries, The Bible, textbooks per se, reprints, and children's books, and list leaders in fiction and non-fiction in separate categories.

While the method of compiling today's best seller lists still may be open to criticism, these lists are a considerable improvement over those in common use at the beginning of the last decade. Late in nineteen thirty-one the findings of the Economic Survey of the Book Industry 1930-1931 were published.[1] This report disclosed that best seller lists were compiled from wholesalers' reports, or were the statements of leading booksellers, or were the hunches of the compilers of the lists, and that they were often catalogues of books for which large sales were hoped rather than lists of those books which actually sold most widely. Under such conditions there was little agreement among best seller lists. Bewilderment existed, both in the public mind and among booksellers. Lack of confidence in the announcements and advertisements of publishers and booksellers ensued. Condemnation of best seller lists be-

[1] "Economic Survey of the Book Industry, 1930-1931", Orin H. Cheney, director, (New York: National Association of Book Publishers, 1931).

came bitter, leading eventually to public criticism of the methods used in compiling best seller lists from within the book selling business itself. In nineteen thirty-two the New York Times[1] reported Mr. M. Lincoln Schuster of the firm of Simon Schuster, book publishers, as declaring,

> "current procedures for compiling and disseminating the so-called 'best seller lists' have led to many abuses. The publishing and book selling fields as a whole must take steps to correct them immediately or the term 'best seller', now haphazardly and vaguely used in a confusing and misleading way, will soon become utterly meaningless."

He advised the formation of a representative trade committee to define the phrase "best seller" and to codify some systematic procedure for the truly representative preparation and issuance of best seller lists. In the same statement he averred that in addition to the immediate news value of best seller lists and the legitimate incentive they furnish to the book buying and book reading impulse, an impartial nation wide and corroborated best seller list has a historical function as an index of public taste, a function impaired by the prevailing unsystematic procedure of compiling such lists.

The New York Evening Post[2] earlier in the year had discontinued the publication of best seller lists and explained its action in the following statement :

> "By every ordinary use of the English language a best seller must mean a book which heads some list of books the sales of which exceed all

[1] New York Times, July 19, 1932, p. 15.

[2] New York Evening Post, January 19, 1932, p. 11.

> others. On the theory that the public is interested in purchasing and reading those books which have been approved in general popular taste, newspapers are in the habit of publishing these best seller lists obtained from various retail and wholesale sources. Most best seller lists provide an inaccurate reflection of actual sales. Publisher's records of sales do not always represent actual sales. Booksellers charts often represent local conditions and are often inaccurate. The appearance of a title on a best seller list may depend upon a single clerk's enthusiasm, or upon an arrangement whereby the book publisher tells the booksellers what books are supposed to be selling best. Because I (William Soskin, literary editor) have found that a number of best seller lists circulating in New York City may be objected to for some of these reasons, and because I have come to agree with the Cheney estimate of most of the features of 'best sellerism', the Evening Post will hereafter discontinue the publication of best seller lists from individual retail and wholesale sources."

Of the improved lists which were developed in response to the very apparent need for a revision in methods of compiling best seller lists, three are widely known and used; namely, those of The New York Times, The New York Herald Tribune, and Publishers Weekly. The New York Times chart is a check of the ten leading favorites of the moment in both fiction and non-fiction, as reported by leading booksellers in each of fourteen cities every week. The order in which they are listed is based upon the number of cities which report them as among the best sellers. The Herald Tribune list is a weekly chart of fifty best sellers compiled from reports of about seventy leading bookstores in the country who report each week the sales of their first six titles, both fiction and non-fiction. Only titles reported three or more times are charted. The Publishers Weekly report of the ten leaders, in both fiction and non-fiction, is based on the tabulation, on a percentage basis, of

the results of monthly questionairres sent to two hundred bookstores throughout the country. The figures reported in these lists are actual retail sales. Book club distributions are not included, since such books are distributed through wholesale channels. A comparison of these lists reveals that they usually agree on the leading titles, although they often disagree on the relative popularity of a given title. Such lists will not agree with lists issued by publishers, since their lists are based on wholesale figures and include bookclub sales. In addition, these figures may include books sold to retailers which have not been resold to the ultimate consumer.

Certain ambiguities are inherent in these lists due to the methods of compilation. In the Herald Tribune survey, for example, each bookstore reporting is given an equivalent rating regardless of the number of sales of leading titles. A title is given a place on the list if three bookstores report it as leading: thus, a title may gain a place on the list by virtue of being reported as leading by the three smallest stores while it may not be reported at all by the stores doing the bulk of the business represented by the survey. Therefore, while this list may give evidence of the relative popularity of new books in different parts of the country, the popularity as indicated by total sales throughout the United States is not shown. This tends to give some best sellers too high or too low a place on the list, or even to exclude books which deserve to be included.

Another ambiguity is inherent in the fact that yearly best seller lists are compiled at the close of the calendar

year. Thus, the book which ranks highest in any calendar year may not be the best selling book appearing that year. A book published late in the year may have phenomenal sales but will not, within that calendar year, have the same opportunity to establish its popularity as will a book published early in the calendar year. A total yearly sale great enough to justify a place on the best seller list must be divided between two calendar years; thus, the book may fail to achieve its representative place in the popularity scale, or perchance fail entirely to gain a place amoung the top ten. A book which sells on and on over a period of years may accumulate a total sale equal to that of a book which won a place on the best seller list for only a single year, but because there is no commonly used cumulative best seller list, such a book fails of recognition as a best seller.

The best seller list upon which this study is based is the yearly best seller list compiled by Publishers Weekly. It is a mathematically compiled report based upon the monthly best seller lists of the year. Covering as many retail bookstores as it does from all sections of the country, it represents a most comprehensive report of best sellers from a retail bookseller's point of view.

CHAPTER II

EXTRANEOUS FACTORS INFLUENCING THE POPULARITY OF BOOKS

The popularity of a book may be influenced by one or more extraneous factors none of which is concerned with the intrinsic appeal of the book itself. A book may reach best seller proportions merely because of the previous reputation of the author.

Such an unhappy accident as that the time of publication of a volume and the prevailing fashion in books does not coincide may prevent an otherwise eligible book from reaching the best seller lists. Conversely, when the public isweary of the vogue for a particular type of writing, a book in a radically different mood may soar to best seller heights.

Such a seemingly minor item as the choice of a title for a book may be a factor in creating the public interest necessary to place a book on best seller lists. Titles difficult to pronounce, or to remember, or titles in which words conveying an unpleasant connotation occur, are less apt to become best sellers than titles in which these factors are not present.

Even the amount of eye appeal of the jacket of a book has a share in the varied list of elements making for a best seller. Competition in this area is tremendous, and in the mad scramble to attract the passer by or the browser, one wonders if more rather than less confusion is not created by jacket

designers. The point is open to speculation.

Prize awards often help to make a best seller. Usually, however, the book which wins such an award has already become a best seller, but the spurt given to sales by the announcement of the award may place a book several steps higher on the best seller list.

The selection of a title by the Book of the Month Club, or a similar organization, may start a book on its way to best sellerdom. The Book of the Month Club, at the present writing, has over six hundred thousand members, and, while it does not follow that each member buys the book selected by the judges each month, an average of one hundred to one hundred twenty-five thousand copies of each monthly selection is distributed. These sales are not included in those upon which best seller lists are compiled; therefore, they do not influence the position of a title on such lists, but the distribution of so many copies throughout the country serves to get the book read and talked about, and serves as a means of testing the appeal of a particular volume. Publishers who were once suspicious of the intentions of book clubs are now delighted when one of their books is chosen, for it represents an assured sale. A flat fee of twenty-five thousand dollars is paid for the first one hundred thousand copies which, after the author's share has been deducted, provides a substantial sum immediately available for promotion purposes if the response accorded the book seems to warrant it. Subsequent sales may be expected to bring in another sixty thousand dollars. In addition, a book club recom-

mendation tends to accelerate sales through regular book store channels. The average bookstore sale of a Club choice is twice that of the average sale of other titles by the same authors.

Competition among books is keen. It has been estimated that normally there are about four times as many titles clamoring for public attention as can be properly marketed. The ingenious methods devised by the advertisers in promoting a book so as to capture the public fancy, either alone, or in combination with the confidence the publisher has in a title as reflected in the size of the allotment made for advertising it, may be influential in starting a book toward best sellerdom. At one time best sellers were a pleasant accident of the author's genius and the publisher's skill, but today best sellers are, or seem to be, artificially created. Someone has said that best sellers are the progeny of promotion out of reputation, whether this reputation be earned by previous achievement, or made by some favored critic's enthusiastic approval, or dependent on irrelevant notoriety. It is estimated that publishers today spend ninety percent of their advertising allotment on less than ten percent of their titles. This concentration on a few titles sets up an artificial excitement about them, allowing them to dominate the popular market, not only to the disadvantage of the general line of substantial books, but also to the disadvantage of those candidates for the popular market which fail to break into the charmed circle. Only a few hundred authors out of some ten thousand who are writing for the public market ever see their books on best

seller lists.[1]

The enthusiasm of retail booksellers as reflected in the publicity they give certain books is a potent factor in getting readers interested in certain titles. Displays are designed to catch the attention of the the passer-by and to whet his interest. The bookseller further feeds the interest of a prospective customer by discussing the talking points in a book, that is, the punch lines, quotable items, or anecdotes. Enthusiastic personal recommendation by retail booksellers often brings a book, which would have otherwise been passed by unnoticed, to the attention of the public. Word of mouth advertising is probably the strongest factor in creating sales. With four times as many books for sale as can be properly marketed, it is small wonder that retail booksellers as well as publishers tend to concentrate on a few titles. Booksellers are interested in profits, and if publishers are spending large amounts of money to push a few titles, booksellers can reasonable expect larger sales of these books. The life span of a book in America today is short. It has been said that it is an exceptional book which is not forgotten two months after its publication. It is estimated[2] that ninety percent of the books published do not exceed this time limit, and, as a rule, fiction

[1]Richard B. Fuller, "A Bookseller Counts His Books", Atlantic Monthly, CLIX (January, 1937), 58-60.

[2]Richard B. Fuller, ibid.

is apt to be shorter lived than non-fiction.

The enthusiasm of the reviewers and the tenor of their criticism often give impetus to a book which otherwise might not reach best seller proportions. It is well known that certain commentators need only to praise a book in their daily columns to send a flock of followers to the bookstores. There are periodicals which can start a nation wide demand for the books they commend. Occasionally, a prominent person outside literary circles creates a vogue in reading by public reference to, or outright recommendation of, a certain book. If a book arouses a difference of opinion among reviewers, to which tongue is given in the public press, the sale of that book will increase if due only to curiosity on the part of the reader to find out what all the furor is about. The "panning" of a book by a reviewer, the denouncement of a book by the clergy, or by an organized group, will often arouse interest and increase sales for the same reason. The greatest blight to a book's bid for popularity from a bookseller's standpoint is that the reviews it receives are non-commital.

CHAPTER III

CRITICISM AND THE POPULARITY OF BOOKS

The influence which the reviewers exert in creating best sellers has evoked much discussion. It is generally agreed that in the realm of books instantaneous widespread popularity is not the rule, for the majority of books make their way comparatively slowly by gradual infiltration from the critical majority to the larger number indifferent to learned judgment but curious about the latest hit. It is recognized that hundreds of books are raised to the skies by "puffs" only to drop with a hard thud on an unresponsive market. It is also recognized that many popular books hold their readers without benefit of critical sanction. There is a certain class of writers whose works are largely ignored by reviewers, or when they deign to pronounce judgment, it is in condemnation. Yet the influence of the reviewer on the popularity of books is very great. Johan J. Smertenko[1] pursues the point that best sellers are not written but made. He declares that Americans are ruled by herd instinct in literary matters; not only the semi-literate mass of whom this accusation might be presumed to be most applicable, but even more so the groups which he labels the "better educated aristocracy" and the "minority of intellectuals." The groups may differ, but they are alike in allowing themselves to be led bell wether fashion. Publishers recognize this peculiar herd

[1]Johan J. Smertenko, "What Makes Popularity", Saturday Review of Literature, V (April 20, 1929), 918.

instinct of the American public and exploit it. Many and varied are the means they take to impress the different classes in the reading public with the imperative of reading a particular book, and although they may be as ignorant of the nature of popularity as of electricity, they have learned "how to turn on the current". Proceeding on the premise that a book must first have an essential appeal, that intrinsic quality of being interesting, the American reading public will then accept a guaranteed article. These guarantees are provided by the professional reviewers, each of whom has a following. The reading public on the whole is astonishingly humble minded. It admires what it is told it ought to admire, reads books prescribed for it, and accepts debunked biography and disillusioned fiction meekly. The desire to be "up" on the latest books and to have read what "They" say is good may create for a book a sales figure quite out of proportion to the real difference in popular appeal between it and its rivals in the same class. Public pressure passes for critical judgment, for many a guaranteed book is far less suited to the individual taste and temper than many an equally accessible volume.

Additional condemnation of professional reviewers comes from the pen of Arthur Gleason S. J.[1] who labels them

[1] Arthur Gleason S. J., "Distorted Standards", Catholic World, CXL (February, 1935) 577-82.

sycophants and holds them largely responsible for a situation in which books by the dozen are acclaimed as "the year's best seller". Many of these, he feels, are devoid of real merit, but they achieve unstinted popularity because of fulsome reviews. The fact is clear, he writes, that

> "Professional reviewers either have no definite standards to judge good writing and good morals, or, having them, supress their real convictions and express false eulogies of whatever flubdub the popularists produce and advertise. Yet to these sycophantic reviewers millions of buyers and readers of books ordinarily look for guidance in current literature."

Journalistic criticism, when really criticism and not merely book gossip and literary reporting, helps readers to appreciate the changings winds of intellectual doctrines and the veering currents in the aesthetic seas. At its worst journalistic criticism merely reflects the book fashions of the hour.

From another point of view the influence of the reviewer is not as great as it might seem. An examination of book review periodicals reveals that the taste of many professional reviewers has become too subtle and sophisticated, if not outrightly academic, to render the best service to the general reading public. Under such conditions best sellers become such through the grapevine system rather than through the influence of reviewers.

The reviewers are in turn influenced by certain critics. Mr. Smertenko[1] deplores the tragic failure of

[1] Johan J. Smertenko, op. cit.

American reviewers, attributable less to their appalling ignorance of literary values than to their truckling dependence upon the literary judgments of a few critics. Henry Hazlett,[1] writing on the subject of standards in reviewing, points out that there are an increasing number of critics who imagine that the higher they place their standards the better their criticism will be, but warns that such lofty standards applied inappropriately may lead to deplorable results. Truly high achievement is relatively rare. The critic who compares every new literary offering with the standard set by Sophocles or Homer is forced to condemn much of what is being written by contemporary authors, if for no other reason than that present day writing bears little resemblance to older forms of writing. The application of the "touchstone" theory finds it wanting by comparison. The use of a specific touchstone as a means of evaluation leads a critic into the common error of denying one sort of excellence because it does not resemble another. If the touchstone test were used as the basis of judgment, it might tell us whether a contemporary work were in the same class as that of Homer or Dante, but if such a work failed to rank among the immortals, there is no way of giving it value as second, third, or fourth class. It is with these more

[1]Henry Hazlett, "Standards (Loud Cheers)" The Nation, CXXXL (December 3, 1930), 613-14.

modest orders of achievement that the critic deals in greatest numbers. A critic's standard may be low, it may shift with every review, but he does have a standard in the sense that every piece of writing is judged by comparison with some set of criteria. When accepting a critic's judgment, one should know what these criteria are. The criteria by which a piece of writing is judged should be relative to the pretensions of that work and to the purpose of the criticism. Much ill-natured abuse in criticism results from an overweening concern with the defects of a work to the exclusion of any positive achievements it may possess. Another consideration in accepting a critic's judgment is the fact that there is no external or objective standard which can raise the judgments of a critic above the limitations of his knowledge and tastes. Other things being equal, a broad knowledge and sense of what is excellent will enable a critic to make adequate judgments, for standards in literature are not essentially different from standards in life.

In the present situation it seems necessary to have some sort of a preliminary sifting of the mass of writing offered for publication, a function which is performed by literary editors. Such a practice places the reading public at the mercy of the editors. It lends reasonable authority to the accusation that the public is allowed to choose only from a field predetermined by the editors. What they think

the public will like is what the public gets; thus, it is editorial policy which shapes popular taste rather than popular taste which determines editorial policy. T. S. Matthews[1] has a quarrel with editors on this score and characterizes them as "the swineherd editors who feed the public trough". Michael Kent[2] pursuing the comparison points out that pigs prefer corn, if and when they can get it. In his book, "The Art of Reading", A. R. Orage[3] raises the question of the responsibility of the four parties to current literature: the author, the publisher, the reviewer, and the reader. He concludes that of readers it is useless to complain; they are as God made them. Authors are dependent upon some publisher for appearing in print at all, and then upon some reviewer for the prestige they acquire. They are as completely in the hands of those two as land is in the hands of a farmer. At any time there exist authors of every degree of excellence. It is not altogether their fault, still less the fault of the reading public, if more of the best of their work is not selected for publication. The real culprits, he says, are the publishers and the reviewers, and neither have been blamed enough. Writers are as good as they ever have been, but critics are the worst ever known in any world of letters. The

[1]T. S. Matthews, "The Writing Game", New Republic, XCVIII (March 29, 1939), 226-7.

[2]Michael Kent, "Pigs Prefer Corn", Catholic World, CLV (August, 1942) 585-9.

[3]A. R. Orage, The Art of Reading, (New York: Farrar and Rinehart Inc., 1930).

real charge against them is not that they do not praise enough, nor is it that they praise too much, but that they distribute their praise and blame with no respect for the established laws of literature; their criticism is ignorant. The value of criticism is lost to a writer who knows that praise and blame are both poured on by the bucketful and are devoid of any discernable guiding principles. Mary Colum[1], in commenting on modern writing, concludes that a hardening of literary standards is needed among publishers and editors, for the standards of that portion of the public which reads is quite high, probably higher than in most countries.

Albert Guerard[2] speaking before a group of bookmen described them as a conscious minority who act as guides to the public in literary matters, acting as shapers, therefore as makers of public taste. He warned,

> "It is you, men in the book business, who may ultimately and justly be blamed for the state of our culture. If your sold desire is to secure the largest market in the laziest fashion and with the quickest return, then our democratic civilization is hopelessly vulgarized. The common tastes of the common man will prevail. If, on the contrary, you realize your responsibility, there is hardly any limit to the good you may do. I do not mean to force on the public unpalatable books, that would be poor leadership and disasterous business, but by using your experience of what the public wants, give them the <u>best</u> of what they want, popular books that will not cause you to blush. It is through you alone that the artists and the public can meet. It is up to you to make the introductions. The fate of American literature is largely in your hands."

[1]Mary Colum, "How Trivial Are Modern Books?" Forum XC (November, 1933) 265.

[2]Albert Guerard, "Makers of Literature," <u>Publishers Weekly</u>, CXV (April 27, 1929) 1997-2000.

CHAPTER IV

OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCING BEST SELLER LISTS

Other factors are at work which influence the validity of using best seller lists as indicative of public reading tastes. Book list popularity is measured by retail sales. This book list public is only a part of the reading public. The reading public consumes a vast amount of printed matter in other forms and hears over the radio much that it would otherwise read. It may be that the growth of newspaper and magazine reading and of radio listening has narrowed the book buying portion of the reading public so that it is less inclusive than formerly. Therefore, it may be less representative of the reading public as a whole. Then again, the increased use of libraries, both public and commercial, have reduced book sales and further contributed to the non-inclusiveness of the book buying public. While many of these borrowed books doubtless are best sellers, one cannot without investigation do more than hazard a guess. The reading public itself is only a part of the entire public. It is, moreover, a scattered public, difficult to adequately locate and assess precisely.

Other factors which have undoubtedly exerted some influence on contemporary reading are the increased secondary school and college enrollments and the change in attitude in

the English departments of these institutions toward what is worth reading. Contemporary writing is being given a widespread consideration which it had not formerly enjoyed, and best sellers share in this consideration whether it be in approbation or condemnation.

It may be that the opportunity of reading the lighter type of fiction, of thich the detective story may be used as an example, either without cost or for a few cents as compared with the two dollars and a half or so required for the purchase of a book, may have eliminated this class of reader from the best seller book buying group. On the other hand, it may have deviated some book buying capital from the field of lighter fiction to the best seller class. It is significant to note that in spite of the very active continuance of the vogue for the detective story, this type of writing does not appear on best seller lists.

In using a best seller list as indicative of clues to taste and trends during a given period of time, it is necessary to consider the cultural lag which exists between the impact of an idea on a writer and its assimilation by the reading public. It takes time to write a book and some time for the book to get about. The bulk of its sales will be to readers who have been slow to respond to the impulses which ripple out from the center of national thought and taste. Therefore, the clues in any given period overlap those of the preceding and succeeding periods. An additional

limitation in making a survey of this nature is that the clues to trends and developments may not be clear cut enough for positive analysis. The perspective is short, a fact which, added to the confusion prevailing throughout the decade, makes misinterpretation possible. In spite of their limitations, however, best seller lists have some authority as sources of clues to changes in the public mind.

CHAPTER V

POPULAR BOOKS A RECENT DEVELOPMENT

History shows that the phenomenon of popular books, written for the majority in our population, is a comparatively recent development. What the great majority thought about the Aeneid when it was first made public was of little concern to Vergil, for it was not written for the majority. Dr. Johnson's Lives of the Poets was intended for only a small proportion of the English people even though large numbers of men in the street enjoyed it. Shakespeare did not compose his plays for the entertainment of the many, and what he thought of the "rabble" which came to view his works can be judged by his unpleasant remarks about rabbles. Even the "everyone" who read Byron would be by comparison a small select group today. The kind of popularity we know today is dependent not only upon universal education up to a certain level, but a general democratic atmosphere in which the writer can assume that great numbers of people can and will be interested in his work. In addition, the majority must be able to enjoy the advantages of leisure for reading, and sufficient buying power to be able to pay for as well as appreciate the offerings of writers. Reading itself is a comparatively recently acquired, rather than an ingrained, habit, and so tenuous is it that after a few generations of radio, talking movies, and books recorded on phonograph records, it may be reduced to a modicum. In spite

of the advantages of universal education and a high standard of living, the American people are not a nation of book readers. It has been estimated[1] that the average American reads seven books a year; two he buys, two he borrows from libraries, one he borrows from a friend, and two he rents. He sees twenty-five times more movies and reads fifty times more magazines.

[1]R. L. Duffus, "America Has A Book", Scholastic, XXXI (November 20, 1937) 11.

CHAPTER VI

BEST SELLERS AND LITERARY VALUES

The term best seller is often used either in condemnation or approval by two groups neither of which are thinking of sales, but rather of literary values. In this sense best seller is a[1] "mischievous" term and is really a "monstrous misuse" of a term which basically has nothing to do with literary qualities. Best sellers may be of various kinds, good, bad, and indifferent in qualities and theme. Books that are popular with a majority will instantly become unpopular with that perverse minority who dislike sharing enthusiasms outside their own select circle. Books by writers of established reputation[2] "annoy young critics who prefer to find a few geese of their own to turn into swans." Such has always been the case, and human nature being fundamentally the same throughout the years, we may expect this situation to recurrently manifest itself. The term best seller has had bequeathed to it an odor of vulgarity which has tended to enlarge that circle of readers who are prepared to dislike what the general public likes. These readers complain that in the contemporary book world everything is monstrously overpraised

[1] "Mr. Priestly on Best Sellers", Publishers Weekly, CXXXV (March 24, 1934), 1212-13.

[2] ibid.

and overadvertised. Investigation reveals that this is not a condition confined to the contemporary scene. Publishers Weekly in commenting on this point tacitly admits that book publicity may be overdone, but defends best seller lists on the ground that there is still a natural interest on the part of the public to know what others are reading. The findings of two thousand years of dramatic criticism point to man's deep rooted need for the sense of identity with his fellow men that comes through absorption in a common interest or common goal.[1] This suggests that perhaps the preoccupation of the book world with best sellers has a background in this deep rooted human need as well as in trade practice. It raises the question whether it is the instinctive desire to have read or to be reading what others have or are reading, or merely the desire to have ready subjects for conversation at the dinner table, which prompts one's choice in selecting reading matter. Is the decision to read one book and not another based on an instinct to identify oneself with others, or is it, as more commonly claimed, one's desire to seem as well informed as one's neighbor? Further investigation of this phase of crowd psychology would doubtless reveal interesting information which would modify the existing philosophy concerning the reading of best sellers.

[1]Irving Fiske, "Where Does Television Belong?" Harpers, CLXXX (February, 1940) 265-69.

CHAPTER VII

BEST SELLERS AND READING TASTE

The question of the influence of best seller lists on reading taste has created active discussion. Criticism of their influence on readers has been made by Pearl Buck[1], herself a best seller by virtue of having written books which have reached best seller proportions. She denies the function of best seller lists as a thermometer of public taste and likens them to "an iron mold clamped upon the public mind." She says,

> "We Americans who are so sensitive about freedom and independence in matters of government . . . . submit our minds like ignorant lambs to a dictatorship as senseless as any in the world, that of the best seller lists. Such a dictatorship is vicious from any point of view. Reading ought to spring out of individual interests. This running to consult best seller lists is a specious thing."

In contradiction to this poimt of view it can be pointed out that best seller lists are not prescribed reading, and that furthermore best sellers do not comprise the bulk of the reading done by the public. Figures gathered by a representative bookseller[2] show that about eighteen percent of his business was due to sales of books on the What America is Reading list, the Herald Tribune chart. His figures further showed that after deducting sales of such books as those on religion, medicine, scientific subjects, those in his lending library, periodicals, dictionaries, reference books, classics,

[1] New York Times, April 28, 1938, p. 21.

[2] Richard B. Fuller, op. cit.

and those books termed old standbys, forty percent of his business was in those new books which do not make best seller lists.

Furthermore the reading tastes of the public are what make best seller lists in the first place, not the other way around. Throughout the country as a whole there will be large numbers of people who will have interests, tastes, and characteristics in common, and who, therefore, will all like the same books. The appearance of a book on a best seller list is evidence of the universality of a common taste, and should not be construed to mean that individualism is being undermined, nor that American reading is being regimented.

A further point is made by best seller adherents that the profits on the sales of best sellers makes possible a more democratic condition in the book business in that they permit the publication of experimental writings, works of advanced thinking, art for art's sake, and the like, by absorbing the losses of unsuccessful publications. Only through the alternative of a subsidy may unprofitable books be made available. Private subsidies are uncertain and public subsidies open an avenue for censorship.

Mrs. Buck[1] further charges best seller lists with a pernicious influence on writers. She asks, "Shall a novelist go on writing to get on the best seller list, or shall he consider his own soul and write honestly from it?" In her own case she admits writing The Good Earth, her biggest best

[1]New York Times, op. cit.

seller, as a pot boiler, and declares that best sellers are easy to write, even for the American book public which she terms the most capricious in the world. Her implication that best seller writing is not an author's best work is not generally accepted by her fellow scribes. Margaret Culkins Banning[1] avers the craft of writing for the multitude is extraordinarily difficult and requires as definite a talent as does the intellectual type of writing. There is a general feeling among writers that the majority of them write as well as they can. The cash rewards which come with popularity and which are out of all proportion to the normal returns from so called serious books, have very little relation to the problem. One makes money this way if one is able to, not otherwise. Mrs. Buck implies that unless one is a best seller he is not being read at all. She says,[2]

> "American novelists have not the consolation of novelists in other countries that if we are not the best sellers we are nevertheless appealing to a small select few. In America there are not any small select few. If you are not best selling you are not selling, you are not making money and worse than that you are not being heard in what you want to say."

This denial of a small select few contradicts the very real fact that a split in literary alliances has developed within the country. At the beginning of the twentieth century readers and writers belonged to one and the

[1] Margaret Culkins Banning, "The Problem of Popularity" Saturday Review of Literature, XIV (May 2, 1936), 3-4.

[2] New York Times, op. cit.

same group, excepting the "claptrap, backstairs" sort of fiction which intelligent readers regarded with scorn and which hack writers produced with their tongues in their cheeks. But in the early years of the century there developed a tendency to draw a sharp line between popular and academic fiction and to regard each as a different art practised with different aims. Strangely, it was the followers of popular literature, not the academicians, who brought about this cleavage, and when the terms highbrow and lowbrow were coined, readers and writers in the latter group used the term with pride. When social conditions produced the age of the best seller, the popular authors assumed an air of superiority and hastened to make a distinction between themselves and their more impecunious brother scribes. It was widely regarded as a more vigorous and laudable ambition to write for the many than for the few. Unquestionably it was more profitable. Today there is a third group composed of those who believe in and cultivate a proletarian literature. There are a few thousand in each of the so-called highbrow and proletarian groups. In between them are the rest of the people in the United States who can and do read. This middle group tends to be split into two groups, one composed of those whose culture and tastes want something beyond the conventional stereotyped plot and action story, but who are not fiercely modern or literary; the other composed of those avid readers who read anything with little discrimination. Although all these groups may overlap

slightly at the edges, they have very little in common; each group has its own familiarities, reputations, and standards of achievement, and there is little passing back and forth between them. Generally what is produced by one is despised by the other. Mrs. Banning[1] deplores the snobbish neglect of popular literature by critics who will devote pages to a proletarian novel read only by a few and let go the writing upon which the imaginations of the millions, who are in effect America, are constantly fed. Popular literature is disdained by critics, both highbrow and proletarian who label it escape literature, literature of vicarious dreaming rather than of vicarious experience, and who do not regard it as worthy of serious consideration for criticism. Mrs. Banning charges that if it is true that there are few or no popular writers who are first rate of their kind, the cause may be sought in the failure of literary opinion to produce the right kind of intellectual climate, and points out that literature will never be at its best in a country which cultivates or even allows a disdain for so large a reading public. A writer wishing to write for this public is deprived of the stimulus of genuine and constructive criticism, is not taken seriously and not expected to produce real books. The intellectuals scorn his popularity, and the masses, unguided by criticism, lap up his careless writing as eagerly as his grade A work. A nation fed upon uncritical or uncriticized literature is culturally betrayed, it is true, but a snobbish neglect of literature by

[1]Margaret Culkins Banning, op. cit.

those whose business it is to direct taste and uphold standards is culpable.

This situation is not confined to the United States. Since many of our popular novelists are read in England, and many English authors find favor among our readers, the comments of Hugh Walpole[1] on this point may prove of interest. He reports that in the decade prior to nineteen thirty-three no one in England had known what a novel was except that the Higher Critics were resolved that it was something unintelligible to the Common Man, and the Lower Critics were resolved that it was nothing which the Higher Critics call a novel. The discussion broke out into a quarrel as to whether a novel was only a special, lovely, exotic, rare fruit produced in Cambridge greenhouses for a small group of intellectual horticulturalists, or whether it was a common wayside flower, prolific and often producing splendid and magnificent blooms. So exotic had been the products of the best authors that the plain reader in England had repudiated them as not being truth. His determination not to read the Highbrow novelists has thereby deprived him of some fine work. In Mr. Walpole's opinion it has been the great crime of the superior critics that they have frightened the ordinary intelligent man from so much that he would otherwise have enjoyed.

The gulf between the taste of the public and that of the critics may be due less to the depraved taste of the

[1] Hugh Walpole, "Tendencies of the Modern Novel", Fortnightly Review, CXL (October, 1933) 407-15.

the general public as compared with the caviar palate of the critic, than to the fact that much of fiction has not been directed to the great public. Mr. Seldes says,[1]

> "We have presented to them a series of works no more intended for them than the chemical formula for milk is intended for the baby who drinks from the bottle; and we have offered them another series, including everything from a brightly colored rattle to a good adventure story. We have roundly cursed the baby for not understanding the formula, and failed to praise it for progressing with the years from the rattle to the story."

Many of the novels of the thirties have been called escape literature. This term has been defined by Mrs.Gerould[2] as fiction that states no vital problem for the fastidious mind to solve, that lays on us no duty of moral selection; fiction that is less vicarious experience than vicarious dreaming.

During the thirties, it is claimed, such writing fed the desire to rid one's self of an America of disappearing jobs and dividends and to find respite in other times and climes. Rural China, as depicted in The Good Earth, and eighteenth century Quebec, as portrayed in Shadows on the Rock, were the locale for two books against which this accusation has been made. In another book, the Napoleonic era, as unfurled in Anthony Adverse, provided temporary surcease. Nineteen thirty-two, the most frightening year of the depression, brought forth The Fountain, likewise called a novel of escape. In this book the hero sought to escape from

[1] Gilbert Seldes, "Over the Tops", Saturday Evening Post, CCVII (April 25, 1936).

[2] Katherine Fullerton Gerould, "Feminine Fiction", Saturday Review of Literature, XIII (April 11, 1936) 3-4.

the world entirely into an inner personal peace. Conflict, disappointment, and suffering might be present in these stories, but, say the accusers, by virtue of being removed from the contemporary scene, they allowed the reader to cast aside his own burdens during the time he was reading or thinking about them.

John Chamberlain[1] flays the popular American novelists of the thirties for failing to face what he believes is the central problem of their time, namely, the relation of the individual to the mass, and labels them escapists. He declares they write of trivial things or cease to write novels. The Saturday Review of Literature[2] takes up cudgels for these non-proletarian writers, rating them as incontestibly superior to the comrades as novelists. It is pointed out that Chamberlain singled out Stark Young and Margaret Mitchell but said not a word about such writers as Kenneth Roberts and Hervey Allen, who, although writing for a popular audience, are neither primarily or essentially escapists. It is also pointed out that the success which these novelists met in writing of the past, together with the failure of the writers who did try to grapple with the central problem of the times, seems to indicate that the central problem is not the most

[1] America Now: An Inquiry into Civilization in the United States", Harold E. Stearns, editor, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938).

[2] "The Central Problem", Saturday Review of Literature, XIX (October 29, 1938) 8.

meaningful medium in which a novelist may write, except in certain minor or isolated aspects. The central problem is perhaps more successfully dealt with through the avenues of journalism than through the novel, largely because of the lack of perspective possible in dealing with situations and events which are so much a part of the immediate present.

One theory advanced for the popularity of so much escape fiction is that the lives we lead today, dominated by machines and mass production, are so dull and monotonous that we require an escape from them. The point may be illustrated by contrast with life in the eighteenth century when the modern novel first appeared. Then, everyone who could read at all read every novel published as well as poetry, history, and belles lettres. Although the man in the street and the more educated man might each favor different writers, yet each could and did read the books of the other. They all lived in the same world, by the same code, and spoke each others language. Reading was looked upon as a means of gaining an education and of increasing one's power of living, a sort of golden key to opportunity. Readers of the eighteenth century liked their novels to be of a power and breadth commensurate with the history and philosophy they were reading, and there was great agreement among all readers as to what constituted good literature. This novel reading audience was a sensible, healthy one, interested in making a living. It had a rich and satisfying enough emotional life so that it did

not seek relief from its existence in vicarious living. The growth of industrialism brought increased leisure, especially to the middle class, but on the other hand this group cut itself off from many sources of rich and full living by most readily accepting conventions and regulations. It is said that in this modern world "most men live lives of quiet desperation", an indictment which may go a long way toward explaining the prevalence of fantasy and escape in present day fiction. Such reading is typical of people whose normal impulses are starved of the means of expression. Those who brand much of popular reading as escape fiction declare novel reading has become a drug with which to relieve the ennui of modern life at the least expenditure of time and money. The core of their indictment of the modern world as revealed through best sellers is that it requires a shocking number of illusions for people to be able to stand it at all. As an illustration they point out that almost without exception the twentieth century has taken refuge in the illusion that there was nothing interesting, or moving, or important in the lives of the working class so that they may be ignored in life and are too sordid as a theme for fiction.

It is further contended that today an author cannot make a living unless he is a best seller. Therefore an author has to make a compromise with himself and give the people what they want to hear, rather than what he wishes to communicate to them. Under these conditions truth, which is the business of art, is destroyed, and our literature becomes debased.

CHAPTER VIII

WHY A PERSON READS - WHAT READING DOES TO HIM

In the face of such harsh criticism of our popular reading, it may be profitable to inquire why a person reads and what reading does to him. All fiction does certain things for a reader. It relaxes his mind by distracting his attention from the routine of life. It occupies empty time, thus preventing boredom or indulgence in some more harmful diversion. At the next level, it begins to exercise the specific powers of fiction by acting as an analgesic, giving him in imagination some of the satisfactions which destiny has denied to him. It allows him to observe and experience without exertion or participation. Beyond this level, fiction performs a social service by giving vicarious release to small cupidities, cruelties and venalities, thus raising the emotional tone of the reader, and through him that of his immediate associates.

Up to this point the value of fiction reading to the individual has been to supply him with illustrative material, and it is beyond this point that the value of fiction to a reader is often lost. This loss may at times be attributable to the quality of the fiction being read and at times due to lack of perception on the reader's part. In either event the reader gleans nothing from the upper dimensions of fiction, the elements of which enrich experience by leading the reader to understand the lives it deals with, by giving him a belief

in the dignity of those lives, and by arousing his sympathy for them. Such fiction would illuminate his understanding of himself and evoke a feeling of humbleness in the realization that there but for the grace of God goes he. Through such fiction the reader gains not only knowledge but wisdom.

Such results may very likely be what would be called improvement in so far as growth is improvement. But pleasure in a work of art comes not from the improvement inherent in it but from the direct satisfaction of a desire. It is when reading supplies some need of our nature that we find it "good" and experience a sense of completion of life.

One's needs vary with one's age, temperament, past experiences, and the conditions of daily life, and may be generally classified into two categories. The first of these is composed of one's impulse to growth; one's desire to experience life in its entiety, to supplement personal experience with that of others, to relive one's own life and see one's experiences from a different point of view. The other category is based upon one's desire for harmony; lacking order in one's personal life one seeks momentary repose by experiencing it in imagination, experiences become organized and more intelligible. Growth and harmony are not felt by all people in the same proportion nor at the same time. The craving for growth is more common to youth; a desire for a more orderly pattern is more common to maturity, both of years and temperament. One's deepest joy in reading comes when it

helps him to conceive a pattern in life of which he is a part, whether it be of but one motif or of the master pattern.

It is often difficult to understand how as many readers as do seem to be able to keep the stories they read in quite a separate compartment of their minds from the stories they see enacted daily around them. Such persons either think that such things as happen in novels never happen in real life, or they have the equally mistaken notion that a story told to entertain must necessarily be dressed up as life never actually embellishes it. As a matter of fact, even in most of the lightest novels there are incidents and characteristics rooted in real life. Henry S. Canby[1] lends substance to this point in an editorial in which he makes the point that even the cheapest books have more resolved and interpreted experience in them, have more consciousness of life, than ninety out of a hundred of their readers' lives can produce in a year. He warns that the American public is deprived of something more vital than pleasure or culture by its failure to read books; it is less alive that its books, even the much criticized American fiction, and will stay less alive unless it reads them.

In reading a novel for escape one is not withdrawing from the world as he may think, for in writing a novel the author is portraying a portion of the world which to him was so interesting that he felt compelled to write about it. One may be escaping from the immediate and personal conditions of

[1]Henry S. Canby, "Reading for Life," Saturday Review of Literature, VIII (September 26, 1931) 145-6.

the moment, but since fiction is taken from the life of the world, the reader is not escaping from life, merely being temporarily transplanted from one locale to another. In reality a reader's observations of the actual world are sharpened by his reading of fiction.

While it is undoubtedly true that much popular fiction has an ephemeral quality, it has been observed that most stories and novels written for the sake of art have a corresponding ephemeral quality. Somehow this fact does not grieve the highbrows as does writing for money. They comfort themselves with the assumption, one which is very likely a mistaken one, that what is popular cannot be much good. Pearl Buck[1] comes to the defense of ephemeral fiction by pointing out that it is impossible for every novel to be a great one, and that there is a distinct place for novels which amuse, interest, reveal, develop and emphasize for a moment a vivid though passing theme, then pass on.

[1]Pearl Buck, "Fiction and the Front Page," Yale Review, XV (March, 1936) 477-87.

CHAPTER IX

TYPES OF POPULAR BOOKS

One classification of popular books divides them into six main categories.[1] These categories may overlap, and when a book fits into three or four of them, it is almost sure to have an appeal universal enough to raise it to the top of the best seller list.

There is the topical interest book, a book everyone wants to read, appearing at the moment everyone wants to read it. It deals with a subject about which the reader knows something and which has aroused his curiosity to a burning desire to know more. This type of book is usually shortlived, so timing is an important factor in its success. It must coincide with a topic of news interest or appear at a time when interest can still be aroused by the enlightenment which perspective can give. Topical books do not generally have universal appeal, and sales are often inflated by the ballyho, controversy, and comment which accompanies them.

An attitude best seller is a book which becomes prominent because of an original approach or because of an original attitude of the author. Its author may be a genius, or he may be a mediocre writer, or evan a quack who has stumbled by chance on a startling idea. The freshness of the

[1] J. A. Goodman and Albert Rice, "Big Books," Saturday Evening Post, CCVII (November 17, 1934) 31f.

new viewpoint often becoming somewhat at item of topical interest, appeals to readers.

There is a vast category of basic emotion books. These are the books dealing with the fundamental human emotions and are generally novels. The most popular of the books in this class has been the sweet, sentimental story which has encompassed all the homely virtues between its covers. This is the type of writing which often becomes popular without benefit of enthusiastic publicity or reviews. It achieves success largely because it has a quality which makes a strong appeal to large numbers of people. It is this kind of writing which has been so severly criticized for exploiting the emotions of its readers.

The adventure story best seller is another category. Such a book makes little headway at a time when the public is in a hard boiled, practical and realistic mood. During the ninteen twenties few high adventure stories became best sellers, but with the advent of the New Deal, itself a romantic adventure, picaresque novels have had a stronger appeal. This appeal has been attributed to a strong need or desire for escape on the part of the majority of the reading public. It has been estimated that twenty percent of all the big best sellers are adventure yarns.

There is the popular book called the compressed human knowledge type. In such a book an important field of human knowledge or endeavor which really affects human

behavior is dramatized. Such a book transcends the topical interest theme. It becomes popular because it has something of value to say.

Lastly, there is the freak best seller, a book whose success is entirely due to accident; such accidents as the banning of the public sale of the book, heated controversy concerning the author, his subject, or its interpretation, and the like.

Although exceptions can be pointed out in each case, books which do not roll up big sales are mystery stories, books of poems, plays in book form, books of short essays, anthologies of verse and humor, short stories, books on how to play games, and technical books.

CHAPTER X

THE BACKGROUND OF THE DECADE

In many respects the decade of the thirties was not ushered in on January first, nineteen thirty as would ordinarily be expected according to the calendar calculations, but rather on "Black Thursday," October twenty-ninth, nineteen twenty-nine. Its ending as well did not coincide with calendar calculations, for it may better be considered to have closed on September first, nineteen thirty-nine when the German armies marched into Poland, or even earlier with the Russo-German pact on August thirty-first. It was conceived in the unbridled optimism of the post war boom, was born into the depression, sank into the Slough of Despond, and was crawling its torturous way out when, swamped by the tide of events in Europe, its existence was prematurely ended. The framework of the decade is so crowded with events, so kaleidoscopic in nature, that a better perspective may be secured if it is divided into three series of events.

First, there were the political and social struggles and changes which rose out of the crisis; the strikes, demonstrations, the growth of radical and fascists groups, and the fight over the New Deal. Second, there were the circumstances arising as a result of the new position of the United States in world affairs due to the crisis in Europe, and the feeling that this country was the greatest and perhaps the last stronghold

of middle class democracy. Lastly, there were the events incident to the closing of the frontier in American business as reflected in the growth of large corporations at the expense of smaller ones, the narrowing of the opportunities for pecuniary success and the resulting changes in middle class ideas. In each series of events one finds fertile background for all types of writing. Never was there a period in which literary events followed so closely on the flying coatails of social events. In ordinary times it takes a long memory to recognize that a certain book was, or may have been, inspired by a particular event, but in the nineteen thirties the time between the event and its expression in literature was so short that one could scarcely miss their connection.

The debacle of the Stock Exchange brought to a violent close that fabulous Post War era of Coolidge-Hoover prosperity, and from the ensuing confusion, there was catapulted upon the bewildered American public that phenomenon called the New Deal. Against the general pattern of panic, business demoralization, and Rooseveltian experimentation, certain social changes made themselves manifest. The Post War generation had been characterized by what seemed, in contrast to the generation which preceded it, extremes in short skirts, mixed drinking both in and out of speak-easies, parked car petting parties, uninhibited speech, defiance of parental authority, and a second hand knowledge of Freudian complexes. The processes of social change are continuous and complex and do not manifest

themselves simultaneously everywhere. Therefore the Lynds[1] in their study made in nineteen thirty-five found strong evidences of Post War characteristics in centers of population to which change had not filtered. The changes had become marked about nineteen thirty-three, and it was apparent that the pendulum was reversing its swing, that extremes were giving way to a regard for moderation. The older generation was changing its ways too; they were less shocked by their progeny, and when not themselves adopting their manners and beliefs, were more tolerant of them.

In the field of morals the changes which were taking place were less changes in the facts of abstinence, continence, or modesty than changes of mood and emphasis. Although there is evidence[2] to show that continence was not on the wane, there was less breathless excitement about the matter; it was considered a personal affair and no longer news. There was an appreciable approval of marriage and family life to which the economic difficulties of the depression were undoubtedly the greatest contributing factors. Further, events of life had become so challenging that questions of intimate personal relationships were overshadowed by them.

In the realm of clothes and fashions the changes were influenced by business expediencies, but nevertheless are indicative. The nineteen twenties had revolted against the

[1]Robert S. Lynd and Helen M. Lynd, Middletown in Transition, (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1937).

[2]"The Fortune Quarterly Survey VIII, Fortune XV April , 1937, 188.

dignity, the formality and the cumbersome clothes of their predecessors. They had developed an armor of sophistication impervious to shock. Even before the turn of the decade this pose was giving way to a desire for graciousness, expressed in the appearance of tail coats and floor length gowns for evening wear, longer day time dresses, prettier hats and hair styles. The alert interested manner supplanted the bored sophisticated one. More upper and middle class women were working, but no matter how efficient they might be in their jobs, they were Feminine in their leisure time, thus restoring the male ego. Before the close of the decade another fashion trend became marked, that of the "little girl" costume, more especially the old fashioned little girl. Fashions in drinking changed with the repeal of the eighteenth ammendment. Speak-easies came out into the open as cocktail lounges and others, beautifully fitted out and decorated, sprang into existence. Drinking became not only respectable but ubiquitous and decreased in stridency. Mixed drinking was commonplace, and comparatively few places were restricted to men only. Prohibition was virtually a dead issue.

Severl changes combined together made a sort of loose pattern for relaxation during the decade. Shorter working hours and the five day week changed the pattern of living for millions of Americans. Week end travel experienced a sharp increase. The establishment of numerous facilities for public enjoyment such as beaches, playgrounds, and public

golf courses, resulted in the democratization of leisure not hitherto possible. Spectator sports were still popular, but the influence of the increased leisure was more evident in the field of active sports. Roller skating, soft ball, bicycling, and skiing collected many new enthusiasts. The vogue for winter holidays as well as summer vacations appeared among the middle class. Changes in sports clothing kept pace or even led the way in the trend toward greater relaxation for Americans. Increased leisure led to an increase in bridge playing among all classes and ages. Other games grew in popularity, and all were often played for stakes. There was an increase in gambling of all types from bingo games to international sweepstakes.

Another marked change appearing in the thirties was the decline of the church as an influence in American life. The depression had wrecked the rosy-hued bubble which had been inflated by such assumptions as that a college education was an open sesame to a job; that had work would bring success; that poverty was the result of ignorance, imcompetence, or of very special misfortune and should be taken care of locally; and that investment in gilt-edged securities would assure one of a steady income. In the days of dark despair which followed, it might have been expected that the disillusioned and bitter victims of the crash would turn to the church as a stronghold of faith. Although there was apparently prevalent a strong feeling for a kind of religion, the leadership of the

church had declined. The times had evolved new creeds and devotions. The cult of social mindedness grew into an organized action toward economic and social salvation. The Townsend Plan gained adherents apace, and the leftists movements waxed strong. Both urbanities and intellectuals rallied to the cause of the common man, and their combined voices were heard in economic, social and political domains.

These were the more apparent and outward manifestations of the social changes of the decade, but underlying them was a new tension and disquiet, a feeling of doubt, of fear. The problems confronting the country loomed huge and foreboding and events moved so swiftly that people were bewildered, unable to achieve any degree of certainty from the chaos of the times. This feeling became articulate in Archibald MacLeish's poem, Land of the Free,[1] in which the voice of the people speaks saying, "We don't know, we can't say, we're wondering," and crystallized itself into a fatalistic attitude both among the youth in colleges and men in the business world.[2]

[1] Archibald MacLeish, "Land of the Free," (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1938).

[2] "Fortune Quarterly Survey, V," Fortune XIV (July, 1936) 83-84.

CHAPTER XI

THE BACKGROUND REFLECTED IN POPULAR WRITING

The social and political struggle found voice in so-called proletarian writing, largely a literature of social protest and used as a weapon of attack. The many novels produced by this group of writers had come to have a standard pattern; that of a young worker, honest, naive and politically undeveloped, driven by intolerable mistreatment to take part in a strike which was always ruthlessly suppressed and in which the leader was usually killed; the hero then becomes conscious of his mission in the party, feels his unity with the whole of the working class and marches forth to new battle in the name of mankind. In the middle of the thirties a modification of the policies of the left wing radicals succeeded in making converts of some writers who had disapproved of their former revolutionary measures and influenced others either directly or indirectly.

Critical attention to novels of social protest seemed out of proportion to their popularity, for few sold more than twenty-five hundred copies. The majority of the public did not wish social documents to read. To gain attention such writing must appeal primarily to other impulses. The left wing press sang paeans of extravagant praise while conservatives and the dissident hurled bitter invectives. By nineteen thirty-six there was a strong feeling that proletarian

literature was on the wane.

Granville Hicks[1] comes to the defense of left wing writers against whom it has been charged that their failures were attributable to their political dogmas. He does not concede the point of failure, but says that where faults existed they should have been attributed to ignorance, to faults of insight, to literary incompetence, or other weaknesses of that order rather than to political theories. He says, contrary to popular belief, most communistic writers do not write novels in accordance with political theory alone, but write as all other authors do, out of their perceptions and emotions, the reflections of which, in their case, happen to have found political as well as literary expression. It would appear that the turmoil of the thirties was not confined merely to a handful of extreme radicals battling over dogma. These arguments were but symptomatic of something more important, the change which was taking place in the consciousness of American writers.

Proletarian writers broke through the mold which had been cast for them and experimented with new forms and themes: producing share cropper novels; stories of the shanty Irish; tales of industrial life in which the theme was the daily monotony and the seasonal insecurity of the men on the assembly line; collective novels in which the hero was portrayed as a group, a factory, a town, or even the country as a whole; and in all of this writing, depicting the intimate

[1] Granville Hicks, "The Fighting Decade," Saturday Review of Literature, XXII (July 6, 1940) 3-5.

scenes of working class life. Throughout this new writing, the class struggle was perhaps less vividly portrayed than formerly but was a none the less persuasive background.

The appearance of Grapes of Wrath as a best seller in nineteen thirty-nine would seem to indicate that from these experiments proletarian literature had refined itself and had built a method and tradition sufficiently appealing to capture popular public attention. Malcolm Cowley[1] says the whole of proletarian literature is summarized in this book, and much of it is carried to a new level of excellence.

This book might not have been so successful if the public had not been ready for it. In prosperous years it would have seemed ridiculous that men would ever give all their thought to getting enough to eat and wear and a place to sleep. The circumstances of the depression were such, however, that these desires came to dominate man's whole existence, and so powerful were thay that they took on a romantic, even heroic aureole. Self-sufficiency became for many the summum bonum. Poverty was the villain of the thirties. Even Gone With the Wind and The Good Earth, although not in the proletarian tradition, deal with the problems of poverty and desperate survival. By the end of the decade, however, Americans had seen so much of unemployment and poverty that they had not only come to acknowledge these facts but

[1]Malcolm Cowley, "Farewell to the 1930's," New Republic, CI (November 8, 1930) 42-44.

were even complacent about them. In addition, at the time Grapes of Wrath appeared the American public had a new worry. It was wondering what Hitler would do next.

Even before the United States entered the war, the influence of the struggle was revealed in American literature. First, the doctrines of the experimentalists no longer found favor. Secondly, there was a revival in nationalism; unlike the crude romantic type of the nineties and the nineteen hundreds, however, and likewise unlike the unassimilated mixture of self-confidence and self-criticism which characterized the twenties. It was, rather, a realization that we must not only come to understand this complex but somewhat unified America of ours, a thing which we have hardly begun to do, but we must get this continental state of many races into our imaginations. The wave of debunking literature had served to focus our attentions on the real nature of the causes of the successes and failures of the American tradition. It had served to point out the vital elements which persist and work today, although in conditions so different from the country of its founders that we might almost be dealing with a new experiment on a new continent. Now this tradition must be realized as a personal thing.

What the closing of the American business frontier means in terms of daily life is not always fully seen. American business has been built on true success stories of enterprising young men who have toiled long and hard to get

ahead, and who willingly endured privation in the belief that they would reap the rewards of ultimate success. This tenet had been part of the American tradition. The economic changes of the depression have markedly altered the goals of middle class Americans. They have slowly built up a different set of ideas in which the aim is security at a somewhat lower level than formerly envisioned, and a disposition to make the best of what one has. The change in attitude is evidenced in a growing interest in the amenities of life, in cooking, gardening, decoration, bridge, croquet, and community affairs. But underlying it is fear, a fear of change and of public and private misfortune which might lead to one's losing one's job, and therefore one's jealously guarded position in society. With the acceptance of a virtually closed business frontier and a shift in the "getting ahead" ideal, there is a growing determination to maintain the status quo, to maintain whatever remnants one has left. These evidences are relatively difficult to trace in literature, for they represent a state of mind and are less articulate than other trends. One expression of this state of mind, however, is shown in the popularity of historical novels. A man striving to get ahead in the world is too busy making history to be interested in reading about it. When one's position in the community is relatively stable, however, he attempts perhaps to compensate for lack of opportunity by acquiring a glorious past, thus assuring him-

self of his present importance.

CHAPTER XII

THE DOMINANT INFLUENCE OF THE DECADE

Out of the events of the social, economic and political background of the thirties the dominant influence as manifest in the literature of the decade has been the element of fear. Oswald Spengler[1] puts forth the thesis that all works of art in a given period manifest the definite quality, the ruling passion of that period no matter how different in other respects these crystallizations of the contemporary intellect may seem to be. It is necessary to exclude from such a consideration the popular books written to a formula which vary little from one generation to another and whose purpose is always to escape unpleasant reality. While such manufactured books, written by the "tradesmen" of literature, gotten out for sales, and which exploit the permanent proclivities of human nature may be a sure index of what the public wants, they are by no means a sure indication of how it is feeling. Such authors are too insensitive themselves to time their books accurately to the immediate present. Books of propaganda must be eliminated as well, since they do not usually touch the imagination. However, since such books do not usually become best sellers, they do not influence the purpose of this discussion. After excluding such books from best seller lists, the residum seems to show that there is a

[1]Oswald Spengler, Decline of the West, (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1939)

strong, if not plainly marked, ruling interest in a given period of time which should be definite enough for identification. The distinguishing characteristic of the thirties seems to be that of fear. The fear was sometimes conscious, as in Sinclair Lewis' It Can't Happen Here, sometimes unconscious, and ranged from skeptical inquiry into the possible disintegration of culture as we have known it, to deep pessimism of convinced alarm.

This element of fear is most violently expressed by "the hard boiled" writers, exponents of the school of cruelty, vulgarity, and terror in writing. In their writings the fear of violence leads to over-emphasis on hate, danger, and desperation. Fear of mental or spiritual disintegration is shown in the panic and chaos of the world they envision, where sensitive and disillusioned spirits strike before they are struck and drink in order to forget. That the majority of the reading pbulic had not succumbed to this extreme fear may be concluded from the fact that no books by any of these writers placed among the first ten on the yearly best seller list.

Another group of books more widely read than these seem to have an entirely negative reaction to fear. There seems to be no obvious fear in Anthony Adverse, Gone With the Wind, or the regional stories of Maine, for example, but a closer examination reveals certain elements of fear. In Gone With the Wind, one theme underlies all others, that of the breakdown of an age of confidence into an age of defeat, dis-

illusionment, and disintegration. The bitterness and devastation of this period in American life had been half forgotten in the wave of romantic sentimentalizing of the old South, and it brings us a vivid reminder of the aftermath of war as it happened once in our country. Might not this serve as a warning to the complacency in which we have wrapped ourselves, and arouse skeptical inquiry into the future of another culture, that of our present day, also threatened by reconstruction?

The regional movement has been called "a new phase of realism."[1] It was less a conscious literary growth than a spontaneous emergence all over the United States in an interest in home regions. Phyllis Bentley[2], after a lecture tour of the country in nineteen thirty-nine, lists a robust regionalism as one of her strongest impressions of current American fiction. The articulate expression of concern for the American way reached the popular reading public in the book It Can't Happen Here. The number and popularity of books dealing with American history is another indication of the strong consciousness of the American faith. A nation becomes most conscious of its great past when it feels that past is in danger. Regional writers, whether writing of the coast of Maine, or the backwoods of Georgia, remind us that here we have "the land of the

[1]August Derloth, "America in Today's Fiction," Publishers Weekly, CXXXIX (May 3, 1941) 1820-5.

[2]Phyllis Bentley, "I Look at American Fiction," Saturday Review of Literature, XX (May 13, 1939) 3-4.

free and the home of the brave;" a vast land which fathered this country of ours, a land, which though we have cruelly abused it, is yet more to be reckoned with in molding character than all of the complicated devices of modern life. Such writers are motivated by fear that the chaos and dangers of the contemporary scene may destroy the intrinsic values of the heritage of American culture, a culture which many Americans either fail to recognize or reject in scorn.

One of the marks of merit of Anthony Adverse is generally conceded to be that it is a rousing good yarn of picaresque adventure, yet, unlike the heroes of the adventure novel which preceded this decade, Anthony undergoes at the end a spiritual reconstruction symbolic of the need of faith and the willingness for renunciation characteristic of turbulent periods when the fear that worldly triumphs will not be sufficient for the peace of one's soul leads one to seek the Supreme Being.

A still more curious manifestation of fear which leads to spiritual unrest may be found in the books which seek a meaning in life. Part of the demand that used to be made on religion had been transferred to literature. Any sort of a book which could give any sort of spiritual support or reveal any sort of wisdom was eagerly bought up. Any philosophy which could convey instruction on the management of one's life was sure of a wide audience. Doubtless this need for faith was responsible for the success of books with a patent message such as Magnificent Obsession and Green Light, and others in which courage or loyalty to ideals motivated the characters as in Vein of Iron and The Citadel.

Another aspect of fear is seen in the wave of debunking literature. Such reaction was normal, for fear of the present invariably leads to abuse of the past, unless one is a romantic, in which case he sentimentalizes the past. There were writers who wrote in the manner of the exposé and others who wrote with nostalgic longing for the past.

The ruling passion of the thirties then was fear, the fear of change, and the fear that man was incapable of actively desiring a better life, something beyond the desire for a better radio or a better motor car. The literature of the thirties reflected this troubled imagination, giving voice to its fears, suspicions and strong desires. The specialized discourses on economics, government, et cetera, by scholars and scientists were less in tune with the workings of men's

minds during this period than was their fiction.

By the close of the decade there were indications that the prevailing fear of the period was lessening its hold. The novels of the last of the decade were freer from the sentimental nostalgia and from the motive of escape in which many of them had taken refuge. The interest in history, both fictionalized and non-fiction in character, to explain the forces making for both continuity and change, is another indication that the decade was concerned with meeting the problems of its predicament. A mood of realism rather than satire, which appeared in this writing, gave it a constructive rather than destructive tone. Another hopeful note was the inflexible persistence of an awareness of the need for a spiritual life in an environment so subject to abrupt and extensive mutations, although that need was not necessarily expressed through the church. Still another sign is reflected in the tendency of the writers of the last years of the decade to leave the reader with a challenge, either expressed or implied. Often the challenge has been to the reader to discover in the present objectives as pertinent as those which had been renounced. Indictments of American life were still made, but not indictment without hope of a better way of life.

CHAPTER XIII

OTHER TRENDS OF THE DECADE

Winifred Hutchings[1] writing on trends in modern fiction lists four as being most noticeable. These are: the novel with no central character, the novel of family life through more than one generation, the South in the field of regional novels, and the proletarian novel including the literature of the slump. In best seller fiction some of these trends have made themselves felt, and within the restricted confines of this survey, some evidences are to be found.

Grand Hotel is an example of the novel without a dominant central character. In this story the several unrelated leading characters are of more or less equal importance, and are held together by the common accident of being guests at the same hotel. In chronicles of family life the number of characters becomes larger and the scene broadens. There is a tendency for a central character to become less important or to disappear altogether. Often a novel of this type will run to such length that it will require two or three volumes to complete the chronicle. Within This Present, Lamb in His Bosom, and As the Earth Turns, are three such stories which were each compressed into one volume, but The Good Earth required Sons as a sequel and the Forsyte Saga ran to several volumes before

[1]Winifred Hutchings, "Trends in Modern Fiction," Library Journal, LX, (July, 1935) 555-61.

it was finished with One More River.

Regional novels have been prominent for many years, but those which are represented on the best seller list for the decade are predominantly of the South. During the decade seven novels of those under consideration have the south as a background.

The trend toward the so-called proletarian novel is less noticeable in best seller fiction than are the other trends. Only one novel which may be classed as proletarian reached the top half of the list, but the success of The Grapes of Wrath may be a portent for the future. The proletarian novel does, however, show the trend toward the supplanting of one individual and his concerns by many characters, and the broadening of the background to include the social scene. It is not new for fiction to show an interest in social conditions, but that this interest is steadily increasing and bringing with it a changing attitude and sense of values is noteable.

One of the trends in popular reading has been that of the growing prominence of non-fiction best sellers. Although it is not within the province of this survey to discuss this point, their rise in popularity has affected fiction sales. It is estimated that the majority of popular novels do not approach the sales of comparable non-fiction.

The competition of the various forms of non-fiction with fiction may be attributed to the fact that fiction is often no longer a straightforward narrative. It is rather a study of character, or a psychological exploration of motives.

Authors have turned from satisfying that most general of aesthetic delights, delight in a good story, for more specialized fictional activities. Reviewers write columns on these latter offerings, dismissing briefly the majority of straightforward stories.

Mary Colum[1] has remarked that telling a good story is a rarer achievement than writing a clever analytical novel. She estimates that there are ten analytical novelists to one good story-teller and that the critical attention which has been given them has overrated them out of proportion to their value in fiction. An indication that story-telling fiction may be coming into its own once again is voiced by Bernard DeVoto.[2] He has said that the success of The Grapes of Wrath is a literary phenomenon which reveals something important about the state of fiction at the end of this decade. He points out that what is of most significance is not that so fine a novel should have become so popular, but that its popularity signifies the return and triumph of pure fiction, for as a novel it is conservative and classical in style.

Readers are demanding that beyond getting delight from their reading, they obtain some knowledge of what life in all its many aspects is and means. The literature of pure entertainment has less of an appeal than formerly. In time of

[1]Mary Colum, "Life and Literature" Forum C (October 1938) 163.

[2]Bernard DeVoto, "American Novels, 1939," Atlantic Monthly, CLXV (January, 1940) 66-74.

crisis, fiction is a luxury product which must give way before the demand for pure information. Scores of popular books have been written on subjects which have previously been material for textbooks. While non-fiction in subject matter their presentation apes the technique of fiction. Many able fiction writers have deserted the field, not because they find more satisfaction in writing of pure, rather than imaginative fact, but because the propaganda in favor of reporting on real persons and things has made this field for the moment more lucrative. Wallace Stenger[1] remarks that the thirst for information, at first a fad, has now become a drug; and he observes that while it is possible to obtain more information than ever before, there are more confused people. He laments that the vogue for journalism has debased present day fiction.

[1]Wallace Stenger, "Is the Novel Done For?" Harpers, CLXXXVI (December, 1942) 76-83.

CHAPTER XIV

THE POPULAR BOOKS OF THE DECADE

These then are the elements and forces which influenced the best sellers of the decade. Specific factors can be selected which have influenced a particular book; in other cases, the factors are not as clearly reflected, yet one is conscious of their pervasiveness. The following discussion of the leading best sellers of the decade will indicate briefly the nature of each and the general tone of the reviews given it. For this discussion only the first five books on the Publishers Weekly best seller list of fiction for each of the years of the decade will be described, but other books by these best seller authors which appeared on the complete list will be mentioned as an indication of popularity not shown in the restricted survey.

1930

Cimarron, Edna Ferber
Exile, Warwick Deeping
Woman of Andros, Thornton Wilder
Years of Grace, Margaret Ayers Barnes
Angel Pavement, John B. Priestly

In nineteen thirty Cimarron, a lusty, fast moving tale of pioneer days in Oklahoma, headed the list. It depicts in vivid fashion the high spots of the Run in eighteen eighty-nine, when vast tracts of virgin land inhabited by the Osage Indians were thrown open to anyone who could ride fast enough to stake a claim and shoot straight enough to hold on to it after he had got it; the raw days of its mushroom growth; and the mad scramble when oil was discovered bringing sudden wealth to many, but in particular to the Osages, who had been herded onto a reservation with meager opportunities for progress.

In particular it is the story of Yancey Cravat and his wife, Sabra, who went with him from their home in Kansas to seek their fortunes in the new territory. Yancey was a picturesque figure, endowed with a robust physique, a penchant for Shakespeare, and an insatiable thirst for adventure. In turn he was squatter, lawyer, and journalist; successful in none. Sabra, although delicately reared, became the mainstay of the family, holding it together both spiritually and materially. It was she who took over the day by day management of the paper Yancey founded and built it up. Neither Yancey nor Sabra struck it rich, but their daughter became the wife of the richest man in the country, and their son married a

princess in buckskin, daughter of a fabulously wealthy Osage. Sabra, although undesignedly, became the leading woman of the state. It was her efforts to keep alive the political career Yancy had disdained that led to her entrance to Congress. Yancey's life for all its glamour ran a descending scale, and his end was both pathetic and heroic. Yet by virtue of his sporadically spectacular exploits, he was acclaimed the state's most famous figure and was chosen as the model for the central figure in Oklahoma's monument to its pioneer founders.

The book was endorsed by the majority of reviewers and generally conceded to be entertaining reading. It was criticized, however, for inaccuracy in its observations,[1] for its fairy tale qualities,[2] and one reviewer accused its psychology of being false.[3] It is probably not the sort of a book in which one would find pleasure from repeated readings. Remnants of its vivid scenes do, however, remain with the reader. Miss Ferber was only once again, during the decade, on the best seller list.

[1]Stanley Vestal, "Miss Ferber's Myth," Saturday Review of Literature, VI (March 22, 1930) 841.

[1]G. H. T. New Republic, LXII (April 30, 1930) 308.

[2]Dorothy Van Doren, "A Pioneer Fairy Story," Nation, CXXX (April 23, 1930) 494.

[2]Saturday Review of Literature, op. cit.

[2]New Republic, op. cit.

[3]New York Times Book Review, March 23, 1930, p4.

In Exile, the second place best seller for the year, Mr. Deeping has told the story of the experiences of Billy Brown, an English girl, in Trinadaro, an Italian resort to which she had gone as assistant to Miss Julia Lord in her English library and tea shop. Oscar Slade, a writer, a trifler with women, with a suave and polished though cynical manner, the leader of a cafe group of sophisticated, erotic, expatriates, pursued Billy. When they became engaged, Lotta, Slade's jealous Italian housekeeper and ex-mistress, killed him. Billy, crushed by the revelations of the sordid affair, covered her disillusionment with a brisk efficiency until Thomas Isherwood, a young architect whose ill health had undermined his ambition and success, appeared on the scene and fell in love with her. Billy undertook to effect his regeneration and in so doing regained her own faith in mankind.

The book was considered better than the general run of novels of the day.[1] The chief comments were centered about Mr. Deeping's technique in building a story[2] and his use of formula.[3] While the book may be entertaining reading for the moment, it does not seem to have an enduring essence, due, no doubt, largely to the lack of the qualities which would lift a rather trite theme to significance. Although Mr. Deeping

[1]"In the Deeping Tradition," Saturday Review of Literature, VI (March 1, 1930) 773.

[2]Edwin Seaver, New York Post, March 1, 1930, p. 7s.

[3]"In the Romantic Tradition," New York Times Book Review, March 2, 1930, p. 19.

appeared on the list in nineteen thirty with The Bridge of Desire and again in nineteen thirty-two with Old Wine and New, neither of these books was as high on the list as Exile, the former being seventh and the latter sixth. After nineteen thirty-two he did not appear at all.

The Woman of Andros, third on the list, is a short novel based upon a classic Greek comedy. The action takes place on one of the islands of Greece called Brynos. The chief characters are Simo, a merchant of the island; his son Pamphilus; Chrysis, a Greek hetaira; and her younger sister Glycerium. Simo had betrothed his son to the daughter of a friend, but Pamphilus was not anxious to marry. He, in company with other young men of the island, frequented the house of Chrysis who was a woman of culture and who stimulated his intellect and brought him to question the meaning and value of life. Glycerium had been carefully sheltered and her lack of sophistication left her unprepared for the consequences of her clandestine love affair with Pamphilus. For a young man in Pamphilus' position, family approval was necessary to his marriage, besides there was the matter of his betrothal. The story turns on the decision Pamphilus will make. Will he leave Glycerium to her fate, or will he marry her with all the serious social consequences which such action would involve? Although Pamphilus did decide to marry Glycerium, and his family gave her shelter, she died in childbirth. Pamphilus was left to look into life once more and to seek in it an answer for his bewildered spirit.

Although the theme is conventional, the artistry with which it is written lifts it above the commonplace. The popularity of this book was probably due largely to its appeal to the aesthetic instinct. It has slight narrative quality, but the simplicity of its theme allowed many readers to appreciate the scrupulous care with which it was written, an appreciation which many might not have been able to realize if its plot had been more complicated. In nineteen thirty-five Mr. Wilder's Heaven's My Destination was seventh on the best seller list.

In the next place was Years of Grace, a chronicle of a woman's life during the years at the turn of the century. Jane Ward grew up decourously as befitted the daughter of one of the leading families of the city. Her position demanded that certain conventions be observed; conventions which first caused her to forswear her first love because her family felt they were both too young and because they were apprehensive of his financial status, since he was an irresponsible painter; and later, after a suitable marriage, to forswear a suitor with whom she fell deeply in love because she felt it her duty to remain with her husband. Jane's children, however, did not follow her pattern of convention. They were very much products of the changing times, taking divorce and remarriage as every day affairs, not only as spectators but as participants. When Jane balanced the books of her life, however, she concluded that she had been as happy as most women and wondered if her children with their greater freedom to follow their own

wishes would be any happier.

Richard Strachey[1] in commenting upon this book deplores that Mrs. Barnes should have

> "written at such length about such utterly worthless and tiresome people, people who lacked the ability to experience higher aesthetic pleasures than matching colors for a coat and skirt and whose worldly activities went no further than the attending of a great many funerals and marriages."

Guy Holt[2] suggested, however, that the reason so placid and unexciting a book enjoyed such wide circulation was due to the fact that the urge toward vicarious experience in sophisticated and red blooded romance had worn itself out, and that people welcomed the reassuring haven of the familiar and the average. A re-reading of this book finds it as fresh as did its first reading. Its theme of a changing social order and of conflict between succeeding generations is a perpetually recurring one in life itself. Mrs. Barnes' portrait of the life of the times is an absorbing one, substantial and satisfying. Years of Grace was a best seller for two years and Mrs. Barnes placed again among the first five in nineteen thirty-four.

The fifth best seller of the year was Angel Pavement, a story of the present day centering about a small English business firm located in a dingy little London side street called Angel Pavement. The firm of Twigg and Dersingham, dealers in veneers and inlay for furniture, occupying musty,

[1]Richard Strachey, "Mainly American," Nation and Athenium, XLVIII (November 1, 1930) 169.

[2]Guy Holt, "Fledgling Fiction," Bookman, LXXII, (September, 1930) xvi.

begrimed, and dismal rooms, was in the somewhat incompetent hands of Mr. Dersingham who, as the story opens, was about to dispense with the services of one of his employees in an effort to retard the firm's very apparent demise. Mr. Dersingham, a public school graduate who emotionally never was graduated, was happiest when he was on the side lines at some school activity shouting encouragement to his favorite team in the nomenclature of an English schoolboy. The office force consisted of Mr. Smeeth, the bookkeeper, whose formula for life, whose driving impulse, was a conservative security; Turgis, a red-eyed, pimply assistant, a devotee of the talkies, who had long coveted but never achieved a romantic love affair; Miss Matfield, the typist, a modern young woman of thirty, who lived in a girl's club and whose sole glimpse of glamour came through the perusal of South Sea Island love stories; and Stanley, the office boy, who continually practiced what he believed to be the technique of a detective in the hope of someday becoming one. Into the routine, commonplace lives of this little group burst the mysterious Mr. Golspie, a lusty, middle aged, modern buccaneer, who had selected the firm of Twig and Dersingham as unwitting participants in a little venture, the proceeds from which would be diverted to his own pockets leaving Twigg and Dersingham appreciably nearer the financial rocks for which it was already heading. During his brief sojourn with the firm, Mr. Golspie injected into the humdrum lives of the small group a sense of adventure and romance. He shook the dust from their eyes, the inertia from

from their finger tips, and the routine of their days from its accustomed round. His sudden departure left havoc in its wake, both financial and psychological. These lives, which had been merely drab, descended to the darkness of despair with the loss of position, security, prestige, and the shattering of their pitifully futile dreams.

American reviewers in general agreed that the book showed a true picture of life as a great majority experience it. The comment made by one reviewer[1] that few contemporary stories are better told or are better worth telling and reading was reflected in the popular approval of the book. The significance of the book lies in the truth of it all, the pity of it all, this picture of futile living in an unstable material world where the stroke of a pen may and does wipe out what little security each had.

[1]Lee Wilson Dodd, "Our World in Epitome," Saturday Review of Literature, VII (September 20, 1930) 137.

1931

The Good Earth, Pearl Buck
Shadows on the Rock, Willa Cather
White Bird Flying, Bess Aldrich
Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum
Years of Grace, Margaret Barnes

Leading the list in nineteen thirty-- one was The Good Earth, a story of Chinese peasant life, and in particular one man's love for and pride in the land which he owned. Wang Lung, a farmer of small means, took Olan, a slave in the house of the well to do Hwang family, for his wife. At first the earth was good to him, and through hard work shared by his wife, they prospered, adding from time to time to their holdings. Even through the famine year when it was necessary for the family to move south, to accept their meager portion of food from the public kitchens, and to beg for the wherewithal to supply the rest of the needs of their bare existence, Wang Lung held on to his land. His faith in it was rewarded, for upon his return he prospered again, eventually building a great landed manor, acquiring a town house, accumulating a hoard of silver, owning slaves, and taking a pretty second wife. Pear Blossom was a vain frivolous creature with no love for or pride in the land which supplied the luxuries which she demanded. Wang Lung's three sons were educated as befitted sons of a wealthy land owner. The two older ones married and established families of their own and the younger one ran away to be a soldier. They were all a great disappointment to Wang Lung for none of them had any trace of his love for the soil. Wang Lung, in his de-

clining years, yearned so for his land that he returned to the farmhouse of his youth with a third wife, Pear Blossom, who had been a slave in his household. When Wang Lung was about to die he called his sons about him and admonished them to keep the land which he so loved. They assured him they would be governed by his wishes, but each had his tongue in his cheek all the while. Even before Wang Lung breathed his last he heard his sons planning to sell the land and divide the money. The elder, a ne'er do well, was eager for additional luxuries; the second, a merchant, looked forward to the power which the additional capital would give him in his business; and the younger son, the soldier, saw visions of himself as a war lord in command of the army which his share of his father's estate would make possible.

The book was overwhelmingly popular with readers and reviewers alike. Its chief adverse criticism came from a Chinese reviewer[1] who accused Mrs. Buck of not understanding the Confucian concept of the separation of man's kingdom from that of woman's, therefore, he says, her interpretation of the male and female relationship does not convey a true picture to the reader. So popular, however, was the book that it led the best seller list for two consecutive years, an achievement which must be fundamentally based on merit rather than extensive publicity or happy accident.

[1] Younghill Kang, " China is Different ", New Republic , LXVII (July 1, 1951) 185

Second on the list was Shadows on the Rock, a story of daily life in Quebec under Count de Frontenac as it appeared to the child Cecile Auclair. It deals largely with the transplanted amenities of French Catholic civilization and of the upbringing of a girl of good family under the French system. Cecile was rigorously trained in the tradition which makes the family sacrosanct, the table and wines a matter of art, and the daughters demure and reclusive until they marry. The events of life outside the Auclair home appear as shadows rather than substance for the administrative problems, the opposition of the bishops, the lonely winter between ships, the perils of the wilderness beyond the edge of the town, enter the story as second hand news interpreted by Euclide Auclair, Cecile's father.

The book was generally conceded to be well written, from a point of style and craftsmanship, but there were sharp comments directed toward Miss Cather's softness, lack of theme, and the dullness in spite of the delicacy of her writing. One commentator [1] has written,

> " Miss Cather has withdrawn into a kind of nunnery and now employs her beautiful prose in the embroidery of such wispy stuff as Shadows on the Rock",

It has been called escape literature superbly written, " like a generous vacation from the world which her contemporaries examine in their fiction with harsh feline scrutiny". [2] It is believed her appearance near the top of the best seller list is

[1] Herbert J. Muller, " Virginia Woolf and Feminine Fiction ", Saturday Review of Literature, XV (February 6, 1937) 3-4

[2] Carl Van Doren, " Willa Cather's New Chronicle of Virtue ", New York Herald Tribune-Books, August 2, 1931, p1

attributable to the large numbers of her readers from among Catholics to whom this book as well as a previous one, Death Comes to the Archbishop, made a strong appeal.

It was Miss Cather's intention to create a mood, which admittedly she has done, but once the reader has caught the mood there is little more to be gleaned from reading the book.

In next place was White Bird Flying, a romantic love story through which the spirit of the early settlers of Nebraska floats like a wraith. It is the story of Laura Deal, whom the townspeople always had thought a little queer because she seemed more interested in books than in dates with boys. In truth, Laura's only real life was in her books and in the vivid stories she created from the ordinary lives of her family and friends. Her ambition to write lasted through her college days, and when wealthy relatives offered her a home and freedom to persue her career she welcomed it as a golden opportunity. One regret, however, marred her contemplation of the future; she must renounce her love for Allen Rinemiller, the grandson of an early settler of the region, as were also her grandparents. Her love for Allen eventually proved to be stronger than her desire for a career and in her marriage to him she found the happiness she had thought possible only through a career.

The book won popular approval in spite of its sentimental flavor and its picture of " a simple world in which if one listens to the promptings of his heart he is certain to gain happiness",[1] because, " besides presenting an interesting cross

[1] Outlook, CLVIII (August 26, 1931) 538

section of American life still in the making",[1] it"leaves a good taste in one's mouth and puts one into a mood of courage and contentment and renews one's faith in the fine old simplicities of life".[2] Such a book is now and again diverting, but one would tire of many of them. Miss Aldrich had one other best seller during the decade, Miss Bishop, which was ninth in nineteen thirty-three.

Grand Hotel, fourth on the list, is the translated German best seller Menschen in Hotel. The story takes up the many things which happen within the course of less than two days to some of the people who are stopping at a large hotel in post war Germany. There was Kringelein, a bookkeeper from the provinces, who, having been told by his doctor that he had only a short time to live, had secretly converted his property into cash, had deserted his wife with whom he had not been happy, and had come to the big hotel to see LIFE as he imagined it lived in a big city.There was the doctor, Herr Otternschlag, war victim and morphine addict, with but half a face, a glass eye in the midst of scar tissue for the other half, who spent the days sitting in the lounge watching the people come and go, feeling that nothing mattered but yet impelled by a hope that each new day might bring something of interest, so daily refrained from ending it all. There was the impecunious Baron Gaigern, who with an accomplice had planned to steal Grusinskaya's pearls, but who fell in love with her instead. There was Grusinskaya, once the idol of the ballet, but beginning to become passe, straining

[1]G.R.B.R., " Three Generations in Nebraska", Boston Transcript, September 2, 1931, p2

[2]Christian Century, XLVIII (September 23, 1931)1179

herself to prevent failure, yet refusing to retire. There was Grand Director Preysing, an executive of the firm where Kringelein was bookkeeper, who was in the city on business and incidentally to have a taste of life with a young mistress. There was Flammchen, an attractive stenographer, who consented to intimacies with Herr Preysing, because it offered her a chance to have a few of the comforts and luxuries the habitual poverty of her life denied to her. The lives of these persons during their brief sojourn in the hotel became inextricably intertwined. The Baron, in an attempt to obtain money so that he might pursue his love for Grusinskaya, robbed Herr Director and was murdered by him. Flammchen who was with Preysling at the time fled into the room occupied by Kringelein. The Director offered Kringelein a large sum of money to testify that Flammchen was his mistress so that it might not be known that Herr Director's activities in the city were other than those connected with the business of his firm. This gave Kringelein an opportunity to castigate his former employer for his treatment of his employees and although it might be going too far to say that he enjoyed the fact that the court trial would ruin both Preysling's business and his private life, he did feel justice was meted out. And in the end Flammchen went off with Kringelein.

Although some reviewers saw in the story profound meaning and magnificent character drawing Grand Hotel is hardly more than swift, vigorous, melodrama and it may be validly questioned that the book would have become so popular if it had not been preceeded by the dramatic version of it which served to arouse interest and get the book talked about.

1932

The Good Earth, Pearl Buck
The Fountain, Charles Morgan
Sons, Pearl Buck
Magnolia Street, Louis Golding
The Sheltered Life, Ellen Glasgow

The Fountain, the second most popular book in nineteen thirty-two, is a love story woven between the threads of a man's search for the true secret of a contemplative life. Lewis Alison, an English army officer, interned in Holland during the World War, was placed in the custody of the van Leydens, an old land owning family. Baroness van Leyden had once lived in England, and Alison at that time had been tutor to her daughter, Julie, then twelve years old. Julie had married a German army officer, and was, for the duration, living with her mother and stepfather in Holland. Alison, a philosopher, austere in mind and emotion, welcomed his confinement as an opportunity to work on a history of the contemplative spirit and to ponder the meaning of existence. Julie broke through Alison's preoccupation with his work, becoming first an interloper, then an interlude, and finally the whole meaning of his life. Julie's husband, dying of wounds, was sent to the van Leydens. Although broken in body, he was mentally alert, and being himself a philosopher found pleasure in Alison's company. He sensed the relationship between Julie and Alison; it saddened but it did not anger him. He only wished to die freely and alone so sent Julie from him at the end. After his death Julie joined Alison for she had become for him " the spring of his own being".

While labeled as essentially a novel of escape it became a best seller almost immediately upon publication and was accepted with little adverse comment. Its success was somewhat surprising for it is generally supposed that grave, quiet, care-

fully written stories do not appeal to a large public. Its popularity may be attributed in part to the universality of its thesis that man does not live by bread alone, and to the fact that it appeared at a time when a fresh interest was developing in the things of the spirit. Lewis Mumford [1] has pointed out that the success of this book is proof that a novel can be substantial and popular at the same time if it has an important subject for " how much more human is philosophy than bootlegging, and how much more deeply sexual is a restricted passion than endless chapters of drunken promiscuity".

Sons, the sequel to The Good Earth, continues the story of Wang Lung's sons from his death at which point the earlier book had closed. It will be remembered that the eldest son loved ease and luxury, the second had become a shrewd and crafty merchant, and the youngest had run away to become a soldier. With the passing of the years the latter rose from a common soldier to a local war lord aided substantially by funds which represented his share of his father's wealth. Although the same broad pattern of Chinese life as portrayed in The Good Earth forms the background for Sons this story is focused more sharply upon a particular phenomenon of Chinese life, its internecine wars. War lords, petty and great, have torn and disrupted China from one end to the other and it is this aspect of China with which most of the story is concerned, with Wang the Tiger as its chief character.

In The Good Earth Mrs. Buck portrayed the beginnings of what is called in China a " great family". Such families, almost without exception, begin life on the land and through some bit of luck get a start and gradually rise off the land. After a generation or so, as the family leaves the land entirely,

[1] Lewis Mumford, " What Has 1932 Done for Literature?", Atlantic Monthly, CL (December , 1932) 761-7

it begins to be decadent, breaks up, and disintegrates. This wavelike rise and fall of families is a characteristic of Oriental civilization. In Sons the signs of disintegration appear. With each year the eldest son grew more slothful, more lascivious, more heedless of anything but his comfort. In his sons there was no hint of the sturdy qualities upon which the family had been founded. With each year the second son grew more shrewd and grasping, and more alienated from the land which he sold to convert into other forms of wealth. Year by year Wang the Tiger used his share to pay for a bigger and bigger army. Piece by piece the lands which Wang Lung had slowly acquired by toil and self denial passed into other hands. It is a picture of the degeneration of a family which repudiated the land which gave it its start.

Wang the Tiger approached his final years with but one son whom he idolized. During his youth the boy had been trained with rigorous strickness, not only to take his father's place but to become an even more powerful war lord. To Wang's dismay the boy returned from his military schooling clad in the uniform of the new army of the revolution, virtually an enemy to his father. To add to his despair the boy revealed that he had a deep love for and a desire to return to the soil which his father had so despised.

This book did not meet with the degree of acclaim which had been awarded Mrs. Buck's first best seller, although it was third on the list at the same time that The Good Earth led for the second year. The general tone of the comment was that Sons was not as well done as The Good Earth. After this no other books by Mrs. Buck appeared on the best seller list during the decade.

The background for Magnolia Street, the fourth place book, is a short street in a north of England manufacturing town, a mean little street with nine houses on the north side inhabited by Gentiles and nine houses on the south side inhabited by Jews. If the north side had been in London and the south side in Russia they could not have been further apart in human relations. The two sides of the street were like oil and water, they only mixed when stirred by an outside agency. But one by one things happened, sometimes in secret and sometimes in public, to bring about an intermingling and interaction. The finest Jewish maiden was seen walking " out " with a handsome Gentile ship's mate; a Gentile boy, Tommy Wright, was saved from drowning by Benny Edelman, the Jew; someone started a fund to present the rescuer with a watch; a memorial concert was planned and was a grand affair, even if a Gentile did steal the watch. The effects of the War served to further remove the barriers between the two sides of the street. However, when all was said and done, such intermingling proved to be but temporary, for the Jews remained Jews and the Gentiles remained Gentiles; it was too difficult for them to become one in thought, or outlook, or habit.

The book is long, it had to be to encompass Mr. Golding's leisurely and detailed word painting. Nothing is so small or unimportant as not to have a meaning, and the reader gets to knowthe details of the love affairs, the ambitions and the worldly fortunes of each of the host of characters which people its pages.

Reviewers in general felt that it should meet with popular approval in spite of some evidences of lack of artistic

discipline and one severe criticism[1] which denounced its religion as a travesty of both Judaism and Christianity, its morality as constant flouting of the ten commandments, and its realism as of the ultra type, vulgar, indecent, and unashamed.

Besides raising the question of racial assimilation, a question which is not fully answered, the book shows the romance and tragedy of little things and reminds us that life lived on a lowly plane is just as important to those who live it, just as heart breaking, or just as exciting, as larger events are to those in touch with a larger world. No other book by Mr. Golding appeared on this list during the decade.

The Sheltered Life, fifth most popular book of the year, has for its setting a small town in Virginia. The time stretches from about nineteen hundred five until the outbreak of the World War. The Archbalds and their friends, the Birdsongs, lived in one of those streets whose gentility was in process of decay. The two old families clung to their homes, as they clung to their traditions in the face of the street's changing character, in spite of the noisome smell which the wind frequently blew up from the adjacent factory district. Mrs. Birdsong had been a great southern belle who had chosen the most handsome and charming but the least eligible of her suitors to marry. George never had gotten on, and the life of the world for which Mrs. Birdsong was made was never hers. She adored her husband, however, and spent her life in showing the world what a great love, an enduring love could be. George was devoted to his wife, but the air of high spiritual altitudes which she breathed was too rare for his earthy spirit, and he was frequently unfaithful.

[1] Catholic World, CXXXV (May, 1932) 155.

Part of the tragedy of Mrs. Birdsong's life was that she would not admit to herself that truth. Her life was filled with long and pitiful pretence. Jenny Archbald grew up in the old tradition of the South. Before she was eighteen she imagined herself in love with George. Her adoration amused him until he realized that she was serious, then he struggled to disentangle himself. The climax came when Mrs. Birdsong shot George after she discovered Jenny in her husband's arms. The story of Jenny's grandfather runs like a background thread throughout the story giving it a fine reflective quality. The lives of the others are projected against his personality and his memories, interwoven with the events as they occur.

A dissenting voice was raised against this book by Clifton Fadiman[1] when he labeled it " an exhumation". Herbert Muller[2] felt Miss Glasgow in this book had abandoned the stark realism of her former writing and in her treatment of the refined emotions of the decayed gentility had given way to a petulant outburst against the school of novelists that had been portraying the cruder, harsher realities of southern life. At the other end of the scale is the reviewer[3] who lauds Miss Glasgow for her tale of the victims of the Romantic tradition as

> " one of the few writers who comprehends the intricate values of the life of a ' lady ' or ' gentleman' , who does not perfume the bad smell of decaying gentility, who never neglects the significance of surface, nor the contradictions of desire and act, in short, a ruthless analyst".

[1]Clifton Fadiman, " Ellen Glasgow's South", New Republic, LXXXII (August 31, 1932) 79

[2]Herbert Muller, op. cit.

[3]Henry S. Canby, " Youth and Age", Saturday Review of Literature, IX (August 27, 1932) 63

This attitude seems more true of the book than the adverse criticisms. In nineteen thirty-five Miss Glasgow followed this success with another which was also well received by readers and reviewers alike.

1933

Anthony Adverse, Hervey Allen
As The Earth Turns, Gladys Hasty Carrol
Ann Vickers, Sinclair Lewis
One More River, John Galsworthy
The Magnificent Obsession, Lloyd Douglas

Nineteen thirty-three produced that amazing book, Anthony Adverse; amazing because of its size and amazing because of its popular appeal. This first place novel is a rollicking picaresque romance depicting the adventures of Anthony in his journeys over the several continents during the fifty years of his life. Anthony, whose Christian name came from the saint and the other from the untoward circumstances of his birth (he was the illegitimate son of an Irish-French nobleman and the Scotch wife of a Spanish grandee) was brought up by Jesuit fathers. After an apprenticeship to a British mercantile firm he was sent to the West Indies to collect a debt for his employers. There he became involved in the slave trade and in pursuing this enterprise spent three years supervising man hunts and slave cargoes along the African coast. His spoils from that venture plus the inherited fortune of his foster father made him a rich man. He became an intimate of an international banking circle engaged in a scheme to mulct the Spanish-American colonies of their gold, and became the bankers' representative in New Orleans for this enterprise. His further adventures included a long wandering in the Mexican wilds, a period of incarceration in Mexico city from which he was rescued by Dolores. He lived with her for a comparatively uneventful ten years near El Paso. It was there,after his death, that the little madonna, which had followed him in all his travels, was found by a pioneer party

from Missouri in search of the promised land: "Why swan to man, if hit h'aint a heathen idol!" and was set up for a mark at three hundred fifty yards.

Coupled with its picaresque flavor is a half philosophical vein. It has clearly seen touches of symbolism. The madonna is one of these, a symbol of the continuity of life or of the continuing virtues of life, faith and fortitude.

Its popularity was attributed to the fact that it was not only a good story and a lot of book for the money, but it was published at a time when people wanted to flee reality. It came as manna from heaven to many who wished to escape for a time from the problems of the day. This same observer[1] states that authors tend to write ahead of their times and it is her opinion that Mr. Allen sensed that people were again ready for romantic history when he projected the novel.

Reviewers were not wholeheartedly behind this book, and it has been criticized for its weakness in structure,[2] its indecisiveness in portraying Anthony's inner life,[3] the flatness of its characters[4] and its redundance.[5] Comments in

[1]Belle Rosenbaum, "Why Do They Read It?", Scribners, CII (August, 1937) 23-24.

[2]Dorothy Van Doren, "Twelve Hundred Pages Long", Nation, CXXXVII (July 26, 1933) 108.

[3]Catholic World, CXXXVII (August, 1933) 624.

[4]Geoffrey Stone, "A Large Fiction", Commonweal XVIII (September 1, 1933) 430.

[4]Helen MacAfee, Yale Review, ns XXIII (autumn 1933)viii

[5]Times London Literary Supplement, XXXIII (January 4, 1934) 10.

praise of it ran all the way from "romance with a light heart" to "almost certainly the best historical novel this country has produced[1]" and "likely to become the best loved book of our time".[2] It sold four hundred seventy-six thousand copies during the two years it headed the best seller list. Another book by Mr. Allen, Action at Aquila, just squeezed into last place on the list in nineteen thirty-eight.

An interesting addition to American novels of the soil is As The Earth Turns, the second most popular book of the year. It is the chronicle of the events of one year in the lives of the family of Mark Shaw, a Maine farmer of the present day. Mark Shaw was one of the remnants of the old pioneering stock of this country, loyal and devoted to his land. His daughter, Jen, was much like her father, and it was upon her that the responsibility for the family largely rested. She was the nucleus around which revolved the activities of her semi-invalid step-mother, her step-sister, her own brothers and sister, and her half brother who was born of her father's second marriage. Jen's influence extended to include the Janowskis, a Polish family who lived in a barn on the neighboring farm. Winter chores, spring plowing, summer work, fall harvesting, a wedding, a death, a birth, a budding romance, holiday gatherings are all recorded "as the earth turns."

[1]Ben Ray Redman, "A Full Blooded World", Saturday Review of Literature, IX (July 1, 1933) 675.

[2]Peter Monro Jack, "A Titanic Novel of Adventure", New York Times Book Review, June 25, 1933, pl.

[3]William E. Harris, "Twelve Hundred Pages of Anthony Adverse", Boston Transcript, July 1, 1933, pl.

Reviewers were at a loss to explain the widespread popularity of the book. Although it may have been a "plodding book"[1] it was a "pleasant"[2] book and an "honest folksy story, simply told, whose appeal lay in its relative peace and its picture of the simplicity of living in the midst of complexity."[3] Perhaps there is about the book a touch of that same quality of the familiar and the average which made Years of Grace so popular although the plots are quite different. This was the only book by Mrs. Carrol to appear on the list of best sellers during the decade.

Ann Vickers, third on the list, is the satirical portrait of a woman social worker who finally followed the impulses of her heart rather than the teachings of convention, painted against a background of social propaganda. Ann came out of college in the years just before the war, intensely eager to have a part in the work of the world, somewhat self-consciously hopeful of doing something to make it a better place in which to live. She found it difficult, however, to make the adjustment between her desire to count as an individual and the insistent demands of her emotional needs as a woman. During her girlhood days she had realized that she had within her some quality which made the boys just a little afraid of her. She could not, however, then or ever afterwards act a part and scorned the use of siren wiles although she deplored the lack

[1]V. S. Pritchett, "New Novels", New Statesman and Nation, V (June 24, 1933) 850.

[2]T. S. Matthews, "Novels, Stories, and Prophecy", New Republic, LXXV (June 7, 1933) 106.

[3]"A Maine Village", Springfield Republican, June 11, 1933, p7e.

of masculine companionship in her life. During her college days, Glenn Horgis, a young professor, was attracted to her, but that attachment came to an early end when he clumsily tried to seduce her. Her affair with Lafe Resnick, some years later, was of short duration, for when she disclosed she was to bear his child she discovered he would marry her only because he felt he must. An abortion was performed which she afterwards regretted, for the episode had made her realize that she wanted to be loved and wanted a child. After Lindsay Atwell, a lawyer, whom she felt was strongly attracted to her, told her that he feared marriage with her because she was "a little too big for him," she despaired of any real man loving her. While in this mood she married Russell Spaulding only to regret it immediately, for he was not enough of a man to match her qualities of mind and spirit. When Barney Dolphin entered her life, as she was turning forty, she fell wholeheartedly in love, a love which Barney reciprocated. There were obstacles to their marriage, however. Barney had a wife who would not divorce him. Furthermore, he was sent to prison for his part in a political scandal. Barney and Ann felt themselves united by a love which scorned convention, and she proudly bore him a son. Barney was released after serving only a part of his sentence, and he and Ann planned their future together, content to let scandal fall where it will.

Discussion of the book as a realistic novel has brought forth the opinion that its inferiority by comparison with Babbit, regarded as Lewis' best work, is indicative of the

decline of the realistic novel. Arthur Toutellot[1] remarks that Mr. Lewis having to make a living could do nothing other than repeat himself, and Main Streets, Methodist Churches, Rotarian Clubs, and State Universities will have to put up with it until he considers himself sufficiently endowed to go into retirement. Mr. Lewis in nineteen thirty-six, however, wrote on a theme appealing strongly enough to the fiction reading public to place his book fifth on the best seller list. In nineteen thirty-four his Work of Art was sixth.

One More River, the fourth place book, is the last in a series of stories about the Forsytes, that upper middle class family symbolic of English solidarity and solidity. It is primarily the story of the two Cherrell sisters, Dinny, whose love for Wilfred Desert had turned out so disasterously, and the younger, Clare, who at the outset of the story had for a year or so been the wife of Jerry (Sir Gerald) Corven, of the Colonial Service. Jerry had proved to have an ugly streak in his nature and had culminated a series of sadistic tortures by using a horsewhip on Clare. She left him. On her journey home to England she met Tony Croom who fell madly in love with her. Corven looked upon Clare as his property and followed her to England to induce her to return with him if only as his wife in name, as a gesture to save his pride. When she refused he accused Clare and Tony of being lovers (a relationship which they had not entered, however). An unfortunate accident to Tony's car one night which necessitated that he and Clare remain

[1] Literary Digest, CXVII (January 20, 1934) 18.

together until morning gave Jerry circumstantial evidence with which to bring suit for divorce, naming Tony and demanding damages. Clare refused to save herself by telling of her reason for leaving Jerry. The jury awarded him a verdict. Clare felt that she must compensate Tony for the humiliation he had suffered by offering herself to him. He rejected her offer and friction developed between them. They eventually reconciled their differences and planned to be married.

Although the story is primarily concerned with Clare, Dinny has her share in it as well. Word was received of the death of Wilfred and Dinny suffered a period of despair and self-reproach. She felt herself somewhat responsible for his death for if she had not sent him away he might not have met his death in far off Siam. Eventually Dinny concluded that although there was no romance between Eustace Dornford and herself marriage to him would give her a purpose in life and in their marriage she would find at least confidence, dignity, and peace.

While some reviewers praised it for its "unforgettable picture of English aristocrats whose family tradition is in excess of their ability to maintain it"[1] and for the aid it would give to future historians in interpreting social conditions and change in England,[2] there are others who found it

[1]"One More River," Springfield Republican, October 8, 1933, P 7e.

[2]"Galsworthy's Last Novel Closes the Forsyte Chronicle," New York Times Book Review, (October 8, 1944) p3.

"decidedly thin,"[1] for Mr. Galsworthy had repeated himself and made meagre use of his material.[2] May it not be that the contrast between these later novels and the previous ones reflects, rather than a decline in substance, a change in approach more suited to what the author felt to be a passing post war volatility? The helter skelter of the post war period will doubtless be forgotten. Mr. Galsworthy has snapped a picture of this post war generation whose purpose may be merely to serve as a reference for future students of social continuity, to bridge the gap between Victorian England and a newer social order. Mr. Galsworthy had appeared in tenth place on the best seller list in nineteen thirty-one with another book in this series, Maid in Waiting.

The Magnificent Obsession, in fifth place, was first published in nineteen twenty-nine and although it created no literary excitement at the time its sales increased steadily until it was in eighth place on the list in nineteen thirty-two, and by nineteen thirty-three had risen to fifth place. This story is of a young man who worked out his own personal salvation, as well as bringing aid and comfort to others, by applying Christian teachings to his daily living. Bobby Merrick, young millionaire playboy, was saved from death by drowning by the pulmotor which Dr. Hudson, a famous brain

[1]Homer E. Woodbridge, "Last of the Cherrells," Saturday Review of Literature, X (October 7, 1933) 159.

[2]Florence Codman, "Fiction Imports," Nation, CXXXVII (November 22, 1933) 601.

surgeon, had at his lakeside camp to assist himself through the occasional heart attacks from which he suffered. While Bobby's life was being saved Dr. Hudson suffered one of his attacks which, for want of his pullmotor, proved fatal. Bobby was deeply shaken by the affair and his reflections brought him to the conclusion that he owed society the best of whatever he was capable of accomplishing in partial restitution for having been indirectly responsible for Dr. Hudson's death. Nancy Ashford, the doctor's friend, became interested in the young man and encouraged him in his determination to study medicine and to attempt to carry on the doctor's work. Bobby was successful in deciphering a diary of the doctor's in which he had written, in code, his theory and experiments in what he had labelled "personality investments." This theory was that one's personality was enhanced if some of one's self was put into others rather than taking from others to bolster one's self. Bobby continued the personality experiments begun by Dr. Hudson and added to them some of his own. His medical ability proved to be of a superior quality and he invented a revolutionary surgical device with which he was able to save the life of the woman he loved.

The initial success of this book is attributed to the local enthusiasm entertained for it by readers in the mid-west, and which spread steadily until sufficient numbers of people found Mr. Douglass' trust in humanity such a source of consolation that sales mounted to best seller levels. In the same year that this book was fourth on the list his Forgive Us

Our Trespasses was in sixth place, and in nineteen thirty-five he headed the list with another book. White Banners was sixth in nineteen thirty-six, and in nineteen thirty-nine his Disputed Passage was sixth for that year. Mr. Douglass heads the authors represented on the best seller list in the number of books acclaimed as best sellers, having five during the ten-year period. He is probably the least reviewed of the popular authors in the United States yet his record shows him to be popular with large numbers of readers.

1934

Anthony Adverse, Hervey Allen
Lamb In His Bosom, Caroline Miller
So Red The Rose, Stark Young
Good Bye Mr. Chips, James Hilton
Within This Present, Margaret Barnes

In Lamb In His Bosom, which followed Anthony Adverse in popularity for nineteen thirty-four, the reader is taken into a small isolated backwoods community of men and women bred to pioneer hardships. The story opens with the marriage of Cean Carver to Lonzo Smith and their driving away in an ox cart to their new log cabin. Cean's family; her hard working tyrranical father; the homebody of a mother; the solid plodding oldest brother, Jasper; the hot headed quick-minded rebellious second brother, Lias; the sensitive youngest brother, Jake, were the most highly respected and most comfortably off in the small community. Cean maintained close connection with them throughout her entire life.

On one of the annual trips that the men folks took to the coast, Lias entered into marriage with the wanton daughter of an inn keeper and brought her home to live. She surprised her in-laws by turning out to be a fine woman and lovingly caring for the crippled son born of her husbands affair with a flirtatious daughter of a neighbor. Lias deserted her, running off to California, where he eventually died, but she remained with her husband's family helping her mother-in-law to care for the house and caring for her when she was ill.

Although the members of the Carver family and those of the large one Cean and Lonzo founded (she bore eighteen children) are always in the background and often in the foreground of the story, it is Cean's story primarily. The courage and fortitude with which she met the hardships of the rude life, the travail of childbirth (often endured alone) the dangers of the wild animals are strongly portrayed. Throughout all of their life together, until Lonzo's death from bloodpoisoning, there existed between Cean and her husband a deep but unspoken love. After his death Cean felt the need of a father for her children so she married a wandering preacher who had come to the settlement. The Civil War took the men of the neighborhood away and at its close Cean's husband is one of those who returned. The story closes as they prepare to take up life together.

At first glance it might appear that Mrs. Miller's story was too quiet, slow, and backwoodsy to become a best seller unless it was expensively ballyhooed. Its treatment of southern life runs counter to the drab realistic treatment of rural life which had become increasingly popular in the current fiction of the day, a fact which might predict that at the outset it would meet with scanty approval. Henry Hansen[1] feels the rise in popularity of the book, after its selection as the Pulitzer Prize novel lifted it from obscurity, was justly merited, and was an indication that at the time there

[1] Henry Hansen, "The First Reader," Publishers Weekly, CXXVII (January 19, 1955) 201-2.

was a large audience waiting for just this sort of fiction. It is another of those books which are less notable as novels than as pictures of the everyday life of a hitherto unrecognized group which had as much a part in the founding of our country as did those more spectacular figures of which novelists and historians have written at such length.

So Red the Rose, in third place, is a story of the deep South in the days just before and after the Civil War, centering about the McGehees of Montrose and their kin the Bedfords of Portobello, wealthy Mississippi planters. This intimate picture of these people and their way of life is built around the thesis that the South had developed a culture and way of life never again reproduced in America, that its civilization was intellectually and emotionally more appealing than any that Americans have any hope of attaining and certainly superior to that which replaced it. In this rather tragic story----Stark Young has recreated so brilliantly the virtues and characteristics of that vanished social order that even the most skeptical must believe that the traditional old South did exist. He does not, however, so clearly show the conditions which made such an order possible, and his sympathies are obviously on the side of the aristocrats. A culture as rich and alive as the one he portrays would have been well worth dying for and as one reads of the bravery of the young men, the sacrifices made by those who stayed at home one wonders if God had not erred when He awarded the Union forces the victory.

Mr. Young would have us believe that so fine and sensitive were these Southern aristocrats that they were unable to bring themselves to do the things which would be required to win the war.

Reviewers were somewhat divided in their opinions of this book. It was described as an idyll rather than a picture;[1] romance rather than truth.[2] Its author has been accused of pleading a cause rather than creating characters[3] and of failing to make real the menacing reality of the great struggle.[4] At the other end of the scale Ellen Glasgow[5] ranks it as the best and most completely realized novel of the deep South in the Civil War period yet written, and another reviewer[6] ranks it as "a novel which no American who wishes to know his country's past, the best as well as the worst, can afford to miss." It was another of those books labeled escape literature offering solace from modern confusion by romantically portraying an era now past. So Red the Rose is, however, a graceful novel and good reading, even if its author has made a little history go a long way and has diffused it with subtle and indirect propaganda.

[1]Chicago Daily Tribune, August 4, 1934, p6.

[2]Mary McCarthy, "The old South," Nation, CXXXIX (August 8, 1934) 167.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Courtney Hall, Social Studies, XXVI (January, 1935) 64.

[5]Ellen Glasgow, "A Memorable Novel of the Deep South," Herald Tribune-Books, July 22, 1934, p1.

[6]J. Donald Adams, "The South and the Civil War," New York Times Book Review, August 5, 1934, p1.

Goodbye Mr. Chips, in fourth place, is a piece of writing which can scarcely be called a novel, nor is it properly labeled a short story. It is unlike a novelette in that it has none of the mechanical briskness characteristic of most novelettes. And it is more than a character sketch. This chronicle of a schoolmaster's life with its shrewd commentary on existence and behavior needs no classification, however, its form is not important, its essence is.

Mr. Chipping, the boys called him Chips, arrived at Brookfield at the age of twenty-two to fill the position of junior master. Brookfield was an English grammar school founded in the reign of Elizabeth, one of those middling good institutions which turn out those vast numbers of substantial men who, however, did not get to go to Harrow of Eton. As a young man Chips had hopes of going on to something better than Brookfield, but since his qualifications did not make this possible, he stayed on at Brookfield and after twenty years he was comfortably settled there and quite happy. In the next twenty years he became the spirit of Brookfield itself, the guest of honor at old Brookfieldian dinners, the court of appeals in all matters affecting Brookfield history and tradition. It is a reticent story, for the drama inherent in Chips' tragically brief marriage, his clash with innovation and his victory over the forces making for change, his retirement at the age of sixty-five and his emergence from it to hold Brookfield together during the war is never exploited. It is

for a picture of the essence of the man and as a shrewd commentary on the ways of the world that this book will be remembered. It is a wistful little piece of sentimentality, acknowledged as such by even the English review[1] of the book, although attributed to be very much of a true story of the life of an English schoolmaster through three generations. Much of the success of this story and others by Mr. Hilton is attributable to the enthusiasm of Alexander Wollcott, who, via the air waves, invited his listeners to share his enjoyment of these books. Although Mr. Hilton's earlier books had appealed to publishers, they had not met with popular favor from the reading public. Mr. Wollcott's personal recommendation undoubtedly reached a larger audience than would have been influenced by newspaper and magazine announcements, and succeeded in informing the readers who enjoy books of that sort of Mr. Hilton's literary products. During the second year of Goodbye Mr. Chips' popularity Mr. Hilton brought out Lost Horizon which was eighth on the list, and in nineteen thirty-seven his We Are Not Alone was tenth.

[1] Times (London) Literary Supplement XXX (November 22, 1934) p. 826.

Within This Present, fifth on the list for the year, revolves around the theme of "shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves in three generations." It tells briefly through the reminiscences of Grandmother Sewall of the rise of the Sewall family to great eminence in the banking world, and in detail and at greater length of their years as the leading Chicago banking family and of their abrupt descent from that pedestal with the bank crash. The main theme running through the book is that it took the great Chicago fire to start the elder Sewalls on their way to fortune and that only some comparable catastrophe will be enough to rouse their softened descendants to battle again. Than catastrophe is the depression.

The story revolves about Sally Sewall, who was sixteen as the story begins. Before she had finished school the war broke out and in what may well have been a rush of emotionalism she married Alan MacLeod the son of one of her father's business associates. When Alan returned from the service he was a different person, restless and not at all sure he wanted the kind of a life to which he had returned. The advent of a child, however, tied him to that life. His restlessness found a kindred spirit in a young married woman in their social set and Sally suspected them of having an affair. The rift between her and her husband widened until Alan asked for a divorce; Sally refused and took her children to New York to live. There she met Oliver, who became deeply in love with her and who could give her the sort of life to which she had been accustomed. She seemed about to accept Oliver when she

returned to her parents' home for a visit. While she was there her father's bank was forced to close, appreciably altering the family fortunes. During that time she saw her husband often, and out of the discussions incident to the closing of the bank and the settling of their mutual property affairs, she and her husband came to know and understand each other as never before, and a reconciliation was affected. They arrived at the realization that Alan's time and efforts had been largely devoted to making money as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end, that of making a worth while life. The came to the conclusion that the comparative stringency of their altered finances due to the bank failure will be a blessing in disguise. They arrive at a mutual agreement that the real necessity of having to work to keep the family going will be good for their moral fiber, for although Sally will not need to become a breadwinner she will need to assume the responsibility of running her home rather than leaving it to servants. The story closes with the family listening to Mr. Roosevelt's inauguration speech and deciding to face the future with renewed energy and courage. This ending weakens an otherwise splendid story for its message of encouragement is too much the product of the times, rather than the deeper and less blatant sort which is the product of an intrinsic courage and will to win. The story as a picture of the times can stand by itself, however, in spite of its ending and is an excellent picture of such a family and of the times in which they lived.

1935

Green Light, Lloyd Douglas
Vein of Iron, Ellen Glasgow
Of Time and the River, Thomas Wolfe
Time Out of Mind, Rachel Field
Goodbye Mr. Chips, James Hilton

Green Light is a designedly inspirational novel permeated with sweetness and light. Its philosophy is of the warm comforting sort which appealed to the same large public which made Magnificent Obsession and Forgive us Our Trespasses best sellers. The medium through which the author's message is transmitted is the character Dean Harcourt. The Dean propounds, both from the pulpit and through personal interviews, the theory that all that happens, be it good or otherwise, is for the best. Man, he says, is ever advancing and though an individual may be frustrated for a while ultimately he will receive a signal, which he likens to a green traffic light, to move ahead. The Dean was sort of a father confessor to many people, and he often brought together various of the individuals who had come to him with their troubles in the belief that one might help the other. Two such persons were Newell Paige and Phyllis Dexter. Paige was a brilliant young surgeon who through devotion to the head surgeon had taken the blame for the others carelessness which resulted in the death of Mrs. Dexter, Phyllis' mother. Phyllis, by coincidence, met the young doctor, was strongly attracted to him before she knew who he was but turned against him when she discovered his identity, for she believed him responsible for her mother's death. The Dean who knew the truth of the matter, arranged that Phyllis

should go as a teacher to an isolated mining town where the doctor was engaged in dangerous research with spotted fever. The Dean was also responsible for Paige eventually being exonerated from blame for Mrs. Dexter's death. The two young people marry and presumably live happily ever after.

In this story the use of coincidence is greatly overworked and a host of characters, some of whom are patently manufactured for the occasion come and go at the mere lifting of the Dean's finger. One reviewer has aptly described the book when he said of it that "it is wholesome, optimistic, and packed with good feeling. It is also mawkish, badly written and full of saccharine platitudes."[1] Apparently the comfort which readers got from this book outweighed the faults in literary qualities, for they bought it in such large numbers that it became the year's leading best seller.

In second place was Ellen Glasgow's second best seller of the decade, Vein of Iron. It is the story of the courage with which the various members of the Fincastle family faced their problems during the first three decades of the present century, and is focused upon Ada Fincastle, who was a child when the story opens. Ada's father had been a promising young minister but had been ousted from his pulpit when he departed from the doctrines laid down by the Presbytery in favor of a philosophy which propounded the theory that the secret life of the soul was one's real life. He managed to scratch a meager living from the soil to provide for his

[1]"On To Happiness," New York Times Book Review, March 17, 1935, p. 20.

dependents which included besides his daughter and his invalid wife, his mother and a sister. Grandmother Fincastle was a sturdy soul, both in body and spirit. Her good deeds and sterling character had often formed a bulwark between her son and the severe disapprobation in which he was held. When Ada had grown to young womanhood, she became engaged to Ralph McBride only to lose him through the malicious conniving of the flirtatious, restless, selfish daughter of the leading family of the small town in which they lived. When the war was declared Ralph enlisted. On his last leave before being sent to France, he visited his home town and told Ada that his wife was about to obtain a divorce. He had never been in love with the girl he had married, and Ada had never loved anyone else but Ralph. They grasped hungrily at the opportunities offered them by Ralph's few days of leave and planned to marry when he returned. The scandal created by the birth of Ada's child forced the family to move. Ada secured a position to provide for the support of her child. The circumstances of his first marriage and the experiences of the war had changed Ralph. When he returned, he was restless, withdrawn into himself, and the standard by which he lived had been altered. An automobile accident resulting in a long illness emphasized his mood. Ada's father, grown feeble with the passing years, and knowing his term on earth was short, traveled by sheer force of will to die in the house in which he and his fathers had lived. The sight of her old home, neglected and dilapidated though it was, stirred Ada to envision a better life than the one which they had been living. The vein of iron which was her inheritance

from her ancestors, once more gave her the courage and strength to look at tragedy and see in it hope for the future. Her husband had recognized this quality in her, for it had helped him through his black despair, but he felt impelled to remark "You're a dreamer Ada. It's queer that a dreamer should be a rock to lean on."

Stark Young[1] returned the compliment given by Miss Glasgow to his So Red the Rose when he wrote that Vein of Iron was "a most profound and serene study." Reviewers in general joined him in his praise of her work, the few criticisms made being of a relatively minor nature. Vein of Iron is first rate fiction, its characterization is excellent, it deepens and broadens one's understanding of life, it is beautifully written. The lesson of courage in the midst of economic adversity coming just at the time that it did, no doubt made an appeal to readers who needed to be reminded that there was always a way out if one had the patience and fortitude to find it.

Thomas Wolfe broke into best sellerdom, placing third on the list, with Of Time and The River, the second book of a projected series of six. It is a continuation of Look Homeward Angel, and takes the hero, Eugene Gant through the years from nineteen twenty to nineteen twenty-five. It is a long book, for Mr. Wolfe has written approximately four hundred thousand words to describe and explain Eugene through the five

[1]Stark Young, "Ellen Glasgow's New Book," New Republic, LXXXIV (September 11, 1935) 135.

years, three of which are spent at Harvard, with a period at New York University, another at Oxford and a sojourn in Paris. His verbosity is less a writing mania than a belief in the richness and variety of living. The reality of what he sees possesses him, and he does not cease until every aspect, both large and small, has found voice. Eugene is the manifestation of his belief that life is most fully lived when it is most fully alive. This rich and powerful sense of life seems to him peculiar to America. A deep consciousness of America and its meaning pervades the book and in Eugene's travels in England and France he looked for its counterpart but failed to find it. In Eugene's search for a meaning for life and of his place in the scheme of existence he learned not to be disappointed when people and places failed to educate him and help him find himself. He began to learn the wisdom of Ben's answer to his question "Where is the world?" when Ben replied, "Nowhere, you are your world."

Mr. Wolfe had long been hailed as one of the experimentalists and as a newer writer of promise. His style was quite unlike the general run of best sellers, and one reviewer[1] commented that anyone who reads and understands all of this book has his work cut out for him. He was extensively reviewed, and many adverse criticisms were made of this book. One reviewer[2] found little reason to admire him except as an awful

[1] New York Post, March 9, 1935 p. 7.

[2] Sean O'Faolain, "Fiction," Spectator CLV (August 23, 1935) 300.

curiosity of the literature of our time. Henry Seidel Canby[1] admitted that the book was an artistic failure, but yet felt it to be an important book, and another reviewer[2] hailed it as a prose epic. Phyllis Bentley[3] thinks Mr. Wolfe is far above other American writers of the day and says his books are so living they almost seem to pulsate in one's hand. The novelty of the style and the discussion centering around the book piqued the curiosity of many who might otherwise have been indifferent to a new approach or discouraged by its tediousness.

Next in popularity was Time Out of Mind, the story of the Fortunes, shipbuilders for three generations in Maine, told by the country bred girl whose mother was Major Fortune's housekeeper. The Fortune family lived in the big white-columned house known as Fortune's Folly situated in the harbor village of Little Prospect. The Major, steeped in the tradition of sailing vessels, refused to believe that steam would usurp sails and continued to build his sailing ships. The most ambitious of his products was The Rainbow, to build which he had to sell much of the land which had for generations belonged to the family. The Rainbow was doomed to disaster. Her maiden voyage was unprofitable, and before it could be sent

[1]Henry Seidel Canby, "The River of Youth," Saturday Review of Literature, XI (March 9, 1935) 529.

[2]Edward Hooker Dewey, "The Storm and Stress Period," Survey Graphic, XXIV (May, 1935) 255.

Phyllis Bentley, "I Look at American Fiction," Saturday Review of Literature, XX (May 13, 1939) 3-4.

out again it was totally destroyed by fire set by a crazed villager, who bore the Major a grudge. The Major's son, Nathaniel, frail in body and with a strong bent for music, was a bitter disappointment to his father. He had hoped to instill into the boy a love of the sea and ships by sending him on The Rainbow's maiden voyage, but Nathaniel returned ravaged by sickness and more determined than ever to pursue his music. Rissa, who loved her brother passionately and possessively, schemed until she was able to sell some property she had inherited and with the funds so obtained took her brother to Paris to study music. The Major, stunned by the loss of his ship, his dwindling fortunes, and the defection of his children, fell ill and died.

Kate, who during her youth had been a playmate and confidant of Rissa and Nathaniel, remained at Fortune's Folly. She became engaged to a young man of the village who was ambitious for financial power. He resented Kate's fondness for the Fortune's and broke his engagement to her when she insisted upon going to New York to hear the symphony which Nathaniel had composed. Kate returned, saddened by her loss of a chance for a home of her own and by the fact that Nathaniel was about to marry a wealthy frivolous girl who would hinder rather than help his musical career. When Nathaniel's marriage, and his career as well, came to grief he came back to Fortune's Folly. Kate awoke to the realization that she loved him and in spite of village gossip lived there alone with him until Rissa, discovering his whereabouts, came to take him away. Her

accusing attitude shattered the tenuous chord which held Nathaniel to sanity. During a thunder storm, he was struck by lightening. Rissa in her frenzied grief accused Kate of contributing to his death. Jake Bullard, Kate's erstwhile fiance, in his capacity as constable, welcomed this opportunity to add to Kate's humiliation. She was, however, exonerated of any share in Nathaniel's death and eventually the scandal was forgotten.

Even though reviewers, almost without exception, remarked upon its old-fashioned sentimentality their comments on the whole were favorable and a few reviewers seemed to find in it values in its portrayal of native Maine atmosphere and life. It is a romantic novel in the old-fashioned tradition, wistful with memories of past glamour, and insistent upon loyalties which find small place in modern fiction. There are those who will call it escape fiction but even in their disapproval they must admit it is well done.

1936

Gone With the Wind, Margaret Mitchell
The Last Puritan, George Santayana
Sparkenbroke, Charles Morgan
Drums Along the Mohawk, Walter Edmonds
It Can't Happen Here, Sinclair Lewis

Heading the list in nineteen thirty-six was the story, Gone With the Wind, which opens in the plantation country of northern Georgia in the year eighteen sixty-one and carries the reader through the Civil War and the beginning of the reconstruction period which followed it. Most of the action takes place in and about Atlanta, that nerve center of the lower South which rose from a crossroads planted in the red mud to a bustling city. Miss Mitchell's heroine, Scarlett O'Hara, was the daughter of an immigrant Irishman, who by force of character and personal charm wormed his way into the ranks of the plantation owning aristocracy. Scarlett inherited her father's lusty, earthy qualities and was a complete rebel against the standards and conventions of the society in which she was reared. Stubborn, selfish and thoroughly realistic she determined to regain by whatever means might be necessary what the war had taken from her. She needed money to restore Tara, the plantation on which she had been reared, and to re-establish the life she had lived there. She used her charm to effect a marriage which provided the nucleus of the wealth she eventually gained. Through a mixture of native shrewdness, of determination, and conniving she succeeded in getting what she wanted with one notable exception. As a girl she had set her heart on marrying Ashley Wilkes, an appealing, sensitive youth

who was the essence of all she despised. He was a man of honor and a romantic idealist and later proved to be unable to chart a course for his life when cast adrift by the upheavals of the war. Ashley, however, married Melanie but throughout the time the reader knows Scarlett was obsessed by Ashley and tried unsuccessfully to take him away from Melanie. Melanie was all that Scarlett was not. She never had to think about being a lady because she was one; but she was not a weak character for she possessed a fine spring steel courage which established her right to be considered as a very real person, even when contrasted with the vibrant Scarlett. Just as Scarlett is the antithesis of Melanie so is Rhett Butler that of Ashley. Rhett, the only other man besides Ashley who really affected Scarlett's life, was dashing, cynical, and had a realism to match that of Scarlett. Although a southerner by birth, he was somewhat of a renegade and amassed a fortune by blockade running.

These are the principal characters; they are set against the background of the breakdown of a civilization and the first tentative steps in its rebuilding. From the opening scenes depicting the easy carefree life of the pre-war times, through the excitement of Atlanta under seige and Scarlett's flight from it, her efforts to save Tara, the struggle to win financial success, her battle of wit and will with Rhett, one's interest never lags. It is more than a thousand pages filled with character and incident which makes a very readable full bodied historical novel.

A great literary furor was aroused with the publication of this book. It was accused of being biased,[1] of being inaccurate in historical background, of being vicious,[2] of being banal, of being unreal with the unreality of an exciting stage show.[3] Itwas applauded for its lack of sentimentality and its restraint in inviting sympathy,[4] for the authenticity of its background,[5] for being a contribution to the literature of the American past with a permanent value,[6] and for its realism of detail.[7] The reader could take his choice, but the fact remains that in Gone With the Wind although Miss Mitchell may not have written a great book she does show the elementary literary quality of facile invention, and it is a piece of story telling on a grand scale. It set a new record for sales and held first place for two years.

The Last Puritan, isaphilosophical treatment of the Puritan tradition in the early twentieth century. Although chronologically Oiver Alden may not have been the "last

[1]Evelyn Scott, "War Between the States," Nation CXLIII (July 4, 1936) 19.

[2]Malcolm Cowley, "Going With the Wind," New Republic LXXXVIII (September 16, 1936) 161.

[3]Peter Quennell, "New Novels," New Statesman and Nation, XII (October 3, 1936) 474.

[4]America, LV (July 5, 1936) 382.

[5]Henry Steele Commager, "The Civil War in Georgia's Read Clay Hills," Herald Tribune-Books, July 5, 1936, p1.

[6]Review of Reviews, XCIV (August, 1936) 8.

[7]Stephen Vincent Benet, "Georgia Marches Through," Saturday Review of Literature, XIV (July 4, 1936) 5.

Puritan," logically he was the "last Puritan;" there could be no one more puritan than he, for in him Puritanism was raised to the nth power. He was born into the world with everything apparently in his favor; he was endowed with Boston's best blood, with better than average intelligence, with athletic prowess of no mean sort, with an austere type of physical charm, and he was heir to millions. As a child he was brought up by an intelligent and enthusiastic German governess saturated in the romantic tradition of Goethe. At school he easily assumed leadership in both studies and sports. But he was not happy. He was burdened by a sense of morality and duty which made it impossible for him to do even the most obvious and the most innocently pleasant thing except as it was right and was his duty to do it. Every natural impulse was checked by the thought; Is this right? Even his football and his rowing were done not from pleasure, but from a sense of duty. His great fortune he regarded as an obligation, it brought him no pleasure. He contemplated marriage, not because he desired marriage in itself, but because the right picture of a complete life included an appropriate marriage. He studied philosophy because he felt one ought to know how others have thought it wise to live, and although he was convinced on puritan grounds that it was wrong to be a puritan, in his study he found no other philosophy for himself and remained a puritan all his life. When the war came he enlisted, deploring that he was fighting with the French, whom he disliked, against the Germans, whom he did like, because it was his duty. His whole life had

been a conscription to duty, and it came to an end three days after the Armistice when he was killed in an automobile accident. Only a few people at a few times discovered the rich inner life, which, misdirected and sterile as it was, really existed beneath the rather austere exterior. A little friendship, some helpful use of his wealth, a few episodes of half realized happiness, a deep sense of frustration, this is the pitifully meager summary of his short life.

The form and style of Mr. Santayana's writing, compared with conventional standards of modern novel writing reveal marked differences. The potentially dramatic elements are subdued, the physical background of events is largely ignored, the characters are narrowly seen and are seldom physically vivid. The dialogue shows one of the most marked differences about the book for it is an exchange of soliloques full of obvious self explanation and exposition, not for the benefit of the person ostensibly addressed but of the reader, and nearly always much too discerning. In addition the conversational monologues encompass the core of the speakers words over a whole evening or even over a whole week.

There were expressions of doubt that it would appeal to fiction readers. Elen Glasgow,[1] for one, remarked that she would hesitate to recommend it to the confirmed reader of fiction since it does not have the breath of the body nor the pulse of the heart; she would, however, heartily recommend it

[1]Ellen Glasgow, "George Santayana Writes a Novel," Herald Tribune-Books, February 2, 1936, p1.

to those who prefer to think while they read, to those interested more in the drama of ideas than the play of conditioned or unconditioned reflexes. Other reviewers remarked on its substance,[1] its texture,[2] and its style.[3] Henry Seidel Canby[4] wrote, "Here at last is a Book, a book worth attacking, worth defending, worth digesting." The form in which it is written, its structual faults as a novel become insignificant when one considers them in the light of its merits, its richness in thought and analysis, its plumbing of the minds of its characters, and its revealing of philosophy. While the eminence of Mr. Santayana's position as a philosopher may have prompted some persons to buy the book because it would be an impressive volume to leave in a conspicuous spot on the living room table, and while some persons may have read the book because of the prestige given it by Mr. Santayana's name without in the least understanding what the book was trying to say, it may be safe to say that surely the state of popular fiction is looking up when a book of this caliber is second on the best seller list.

Sparkenbroke, Charles Morgan's second best seller of the decade and the third best seller for the year, is a long

[1]Hershel Brickell, "The Literary Landscape," Review of Reviews XCIII (March, 1936) 17.

[2]Conrad Aiken, "The New England Animal," New Republic LXXXV (February 5, 1936) 372.

[3]John Erskine, North American Review, CCXLI (June, 1936) 349.

[4]Henry Seidel Canby, "The Education of a Puritan," Saturday Review of Literature, XIII (February 1, 1936) 3.

meditative novel whose hero, Piers Tenniel, seventh Viscount and twelfth Baron Sparkenbroke, was in love with three things; art, death, and his neighbor's wife. His love of art brought him fame as a novelist and poet, and brought hordes of tourists to the great estate of Sparkenbroke, which was maintained with money acquired in marriage. His love for death had its beginning when as a boy he had been shut up for some hours in the ancestral tomb. Instead of being frightened he went into a Shelleyan trance in which he got his first idea of Death as the supreme achievement transcending all experience. He consecrated his life to the pursuit of perfection in art and absolutism in love. As the years passed death came to represent to him a fulfillment and perfection that nothing else in life could give him, no matter how assiduously he labored at his writing or how frequently he was unfaithful to his wife. In spite of his unbridled sensualism, for which he became notorious, he secretly dreamed of a selfless love, deserving of the same steadfast fidelity he gave to his art and his adoration of death. He became attracted to Mary Leward when first he met her as a lovely, young, and innocent girl. Before he could deal with her as he had with other women, Mary became the wife of his boyhood friend. When circumstances threw them together again they both fell under the old spell, but on the very night that Piers and Mary were to have gone away together Piers suffered a heart attack which was fatal.

This book received rather more comment than did The Fountain. It was criticized for its failure to

convince,[1] for its laborious self-consciousness,[2] for its irridescence overlying a soft core.[3] Its sheer beauty of verbal expression was pointed out by one reviewer[4] who wrote it was "a book to be kept by one's bedside to be read again and again so that the music and felicity of its words may be savoured and enjoyed." That it was a book of which one could not pass absolute judgment was suggested by one reviewer[5] who wrote that it was "a story to ponder over, to discuss, maybe to quarrel over. It leaves one thinking, not quite satisfied, developing perhaps, a philosophy of one's own." Another wrote that "no living critic was capable of judging it, only time can judge it."[6] That this book, meditative and philosophical in nature and inclined to be heavy reading, should have become so popular in the same year as The Last Puritan cannot be entirely attributable to chance. Possibly it is indicative of the ever increasing popularity of more substantial books, in turn indicative of a growing maturity among the reading public. On the other hand, it may have hoodwinked its readers

[1]Geoffrey Stone, "Misty Platonism," Commonweal, XXIV (June 26, 1936) 247.

[2]Helen MacAfee, "Outstanding Novels," Yale Review ns XXV (summer, 1936) x.

[3]R. M. Gay, Atlantic, June, 1936 Bookshelf

[4]Saturday Review, CLXI (April 25, 1936) 535.

[5]M. D. "Sparkenbroke," Springfield Republican May 3, 1936, p 7e.

[6]Sean O'Faolain, "Fiction," Spectator, CLVI (April 3, 1936) 632.

into thinking it was something that it was not, for, when it is stripped of its Platonic elements, its plot is definitely that of an antiquated best seller, having for its hero an undisciplined blackguard given to sententious talk, who justifies his behavior by claiming his gift of artistic creation sets him apart from other men; thus releases him from the rules which govern them. A reader would need to be very sure of his Plato before he could judge this novel.

The Mohawk Valley from seventeen seventy-six to seventeen eighty-four is the scene of a fine historical novel, Drums Along The Mohawk, with the early life of our country as its background. It is a story of the American Revolution as it affected the farmers in this frontier section, when unaided they withstood the raids of the British regulars from Canada and of the Iriquois from the surrounding country. The principal figures are Gilbert Martin, a poverty stricken young backwoods farmer, and his wife, Lena. They had settled in the upper Mohawk country among those Palatine Germans who were originally colonized in that region by the British as a shield against Indian incursions. There they had barely cleared their first wheatfield when they were caught up in the savage border struggles of the Revolution. Their home was destroyed, and, scarcely knowing why, they were forced to flee to the nearest fort for safety and to endure all manner of privations. One of the high points in the narrative is the battle of Oriskany. It was here, on a torrid August day in seventeen seventy-seven, that the New York militia, under General Herkimer, engaged the

British and Indians, under St. Leger and Brant. The militia was inadequately trained, and the skirmish began with every indication of a defeat for the colonists. Herkimer's men had been trapped in an ambush, but in desperate hand to hand conflict, spurred on by their General, who despite a shattered leg, bravely directed the fight, they withstood the enemy and eventually the battle ended in a draw. The delay which this encounter caused the British prevented St. Leger from joining the army of Burgoyne as it moved southward and is credited with having had a decided influence on the subsequent outcome of the Revolution. There are other memorable scenes, for the book is full of the drama of the Revolution and of the exciting lives of the people of the valley and the momentous forces that swept them along like so many straws in the current. The characters, both real and imaginary, are people who are portrayed as everyday flesh and blood, men and women face to face with the elemental things of life. The action is swift, so swift at times that it becomes kaleidoscopic in nature, tending often to break the general continuity of the story.

The book failed to please one reviewer[1] in any respect. He thought it was too long and padded with pointless dialogue. He failed to find a ray of understanding of the tragic dilemma of the Indians of those days in the author's treatment of them in the usual fictional manner of dirty, smelly, scalp collectors. He labeled the book well documented un-

[1]John Hyde Preston, New Republic, LXXXVIII (August 26, 1936) 82.

reality. Other than two comments regarding defects in the author's fictional style[1] and his depth of characterization[2] reviewers were pleased with the book. Their remarks ranged from kindly comment to vigorous enthusiasm. It had been chosen as the Book of the Month selection for August of nineteen thirty-six, and its sales, other than these, gave it fourth place for that year, while continued sales gave it fifth place in nineteen thirty-seven with about the same number of volumes being sold in each year. Although Mr. Edmonds may lack any great creative ability, he does have a sound historical sense and has written an impressionistic panorama of an entire valley full of troubled, angry, and determined folk. The book should be read for its picture of indomitable courage in the face of terrifying obstacles, a pioneer quality in a large measure responsible for the America we know today.

In fifth place was It Can't Happen Here, a flaming chronicle of the coming of a Fascist dictatorship and a totalitarian state. Mr. Lewis shows how it could happen here in the United States. The primary interest of the book lies in the account of what happens when Senator Windrip, in nineteen thirty-six, takes the Democratic nomination away from Mr. Roosevelt, wins the election, disbands Congress and locks up the Supreme Court. What happens is pretty much what has happened under the dictatorships of Russia, Germany, and Italy. Doremus Jessup, a small town editor, who had all his days been a mild and rather

[1]Stephen Vincent Benet, "A Story Teller Who Makes Our Ancestors Live," Herald Tribune-Books (August 2, 1936) p1.

[2]Albert Nevins, "War in the Mohawk Valley," Saturday Review of Literature, XIV (August 1, 1936) 5.

sentimental liberal but who was withall a spunky fellow, rebelled against the restrictions imposed on the freedom of the press and conducted an undercover seditious publication. When he was finally apprehended his experiences in a concentration camp are very like the accounts of the experiences of persons who lived to tell the tales of their sufferings in Nazi prison camps. The spirit which is America, although it had been taken by surprise by the usurpations of the totalitarians was shocked into action. A rebellion originating in the western states is in progress as the story ends.

While most reviewers condemned the book as a piece of art, they generally agreed that it had other merits. These may be summed up in one reviewers[1] remark that if the book helps to make Americans aware of the dangers of Fascism at home it will have been useful. The welcome accorded the book was, no doubt based partly on the fact that it treated a timely theme.

[1]L. A. S. Christian Science Monitor, October 21, 1935, p. 16.

1937

Gone With the Wind, Margaret Mitchell
Northwest Passage, Kenneth Roberts
The Citadel, A. J. Cronin
And So-Victoria, Vaughan Wilkins
Drums Along the Mohawk, Walter Edmonds

Northwest Passage is another historical novel in which early American frontier life is depicted. The central figure in the story is Major Robert Rogers, the ranger commander who led the expedition which destroyed the Indian town of St. Francis in seventeen fifty-nine, and whose dream it was to reach the Pacific overland by the Indian trails. Rogers was a man of many natures. He could be selfless hero, braggart, splendid visionary, whiner, and conquerer, each in turn, and yet he was withall always Major Robert Rogers. The most absorbing section of the book is the account of the St. Francis expedition. St. Francis was a village on the St. Francis river, near the St. Lawrence, from which the Indians set forth on their bloody raids into the New England settlements. Its destruction was a revenge for a long series of horrible atrocities and an attempt to forestall their repetition. The wilderness journey, the attack, and the long and terribly costly struggle back to safety through the wilds of New Hampshire and Vermont make a stirring account. Then follows an interlude in London in which Major Rogers sat at the feet of court favorites until he could gain the King's ear. He lost out in his plan for establishing an overland route to the Pacific but did gain the coveted post of Governor at Michilimackinac. As

governor he was plotted against, courtmartialed, and exonerated. His fortunes rose and fell. He landed in a debtors prison only to pop out again to fight for the Dey of Algiers and later led the British troops in America during the Revolution. It is an eternal pageant of the eighteenth century told with Mr. Robert's gift for making the past come alive.

Opinion of this book ranged all the way from that of the reviewer[1] who likened it to the blood curdling paper backed stories of G. A. Henty to that of the reviewer[2] who lauded it as a great historical document which historians will acclaim, as well as a great novel. In between were acknowledgments of its various good qualities and mild criticisms of defects in characterization and articulation. Its appeal to readers was sufficient, however, to give it second place in nineteen thirty-seven and fifth place in nineteen thirty-eight.

The Citadel is a character study of a young Scotch doctor, Andrew Manson, who, as a poor, shabby and graceless young medical man, starts off as the story opens on his first professional job, an underpaid assistant to the mortally ill G. P. in a small Welsh mining village. There, on fire with impatience against institutional medicine and eager to do some actual work, his ardor was dampened on the one hand by the distrust, superstition, and general ignorance among his patients and on the other by the grasping and indifference of the

[1]Christopher Lozare, "History and Case History," Nation, CXLV (July 24, 1937) 106.

[2]Ben Ames Williams, Atlantic Monthly, CLX (August 1937) Bookshelf.

profession. But in spite of all the thwarting influences he did some fine work. Sustained by the nice little schoolmistress, Christine, whom he married, he persevered until a successful piece of research brought him recognition and achieved for him a smart London practice. While in London he became involved with a colleague whose unscrupulous practices brought near ruin to Andrew's own career. The episode, however, served to focus his attention on the ideas and purposes with which he had entered the medical profession and he eventually crystallized them in the establishment of a medical center.

English reviews of the book labelled it dramatized pamphleteering[1] and lopsided propaganda.[2] Hans Zinsser[3] in commenting on the book says Andrew Manson and his friends are true to type and "represent more accurately than we have ever seen it achieved, the reactions which the experiences of medical practice call forth in men of varied endowment of character and intelligence." Other reviewers in general thought well of the book. The conflicting opinion aroused among American doctors by this story of their profession, although its scene is not laid in this country, may have influenced its rise to popularity. Such an influence, however, would not be strong enough in itself to continue the popularity of the book over a two year period, for it rose from third place in nineteen thirty-seven to second place in nineteen thirty-eight.

[1]Spectator CLIX (July 30, 1937) 216.

[2]Times (London) Literary Supplement, (August 14, 1937) 591.

[3]Hans Zinsser, Atlantic Monthly, CLX (October, 1937) Bookshelf.

The major share of its popularity may be attributed to the fact that it was a good tale well told.

The popularity of And So Victoria, a tale of rivalry and intrigue in pre-Victorian England and of the events which led to Victoria's accession to the throne seems surprising in view of the fact that the majority of reviewers were sharply critical of it. This fifth place book was described as a mixture of elaborate, fantastic and realistic melodrama;[1] as vulgar with a glib fluency;[2] and as having touches of the commonplace.[3] Its characterizations were criticized and the accuracy of its picture of English life was questioned.[4] The choice of the title was declared unjustifiable except as a bait to catch sales.[5] It was compared to a cross between a serial adventure strip and a comic strip by one reviewer[6] and to the novelized version of a movie by another.[7] One reviewer,[8] however, found qualities in it which seemed to point to widespread popularity, and his opinion that the book clearly seemed

[1]Edwin Francis Edgett, "Why Victoria Might Never Have Reigned," Boston Transcript, July 31, 1937, p1.

[2]William Phillips, "Gone with Anthony Adverse," Nation, CXLV (July 31, 1937) 135.

[3]Benedict Thielen, Atlantic Monthly, XLX (September 1937) Bookshelf.

[4]Peter Monro Jack, "A Novel of Romantic Adventure," New York Times Book Review, (August 1, 1937) p6.

[5]L. A. MacKay, "And So Victorian," Canadian Forum XVII (September, 1937) 215.

[6]New York Times Book Review, op. cit.

[7]Canadian Forum op. cit.

[8]Theodore Purdy, Jr. "Mad, Bad, Hanovers," Saturday Review of Literature, XVI (July 31, 1937) 5.

born for best seller lists was concurred in by another reviewer[1] who felt it should be as widely popular as it was entertaining. Evidently the public agreed with these latter reviewers if sales figures are any criterion.

The hero of the book is Christopher Harnish, the child of an incestuous union between the Princess Amelia and her nephew, the son of her brother George III. As a child Christopher was used in a plot to kill the infant Victoria. He escaped from his guardians and was picked up by a rascally character who made a practice of securing small boys and girls for chimney sweeps. While in this man's company he narrowly escaped being hanged for murder. The Lord of Cumberland, George's brother, and an aspirant to the throne wished Christopher out of the way and sought his where abouts. He had several narrow escapes on this score. He was meanwhile befriended by an eccentric lord who had loved his mother, and he became a member of this man's household. He was sent to Germany for military training, and there discovered the plot which was being laid to seize the succession from Victoria and also discovered his association with the royal family. Christopher determined to uncover the plot and save Victoria. This venture took him on journeys to various parts of the country and to America. The evidence he collected was sufficient to convince William, then King of England, of the danger of Cumberland. Christopher was then free to set out in search of his childhood sweetheart who had in the meantime become a

[1]Iris Barry, "Gorgeous, Glamorous Tissue of Tales," Herald Tribune Books, (August 1, 1937) p3.

famous actress. Thus Victoria gained her throne. The story is a sort of amateurish English Anthony Adverse. It is packed full of nonsense, coated thinly with history and seems very idle reading.

1938

The Yearling, Marjorie Rawlings
The Citadel, A. J. Cronin
My Son, My Son, Howard Spring
Rebecca, Daphne DuMaurier
Northwest Passage, Kenneth Roberts

Heading the best seller list in nineteen thirty-eight was that delightfully charming story The Yearling. It is a tale, laid in the backwoods of Florida, of one year in the lives of a twelve-year-old boy and his pet deer, Flagg. The Baxters, Penny, his wife, and son Jody lived on a small clearing in the midst of the Florida scrublands. All about them was the forest, the wild inhabitants of which provided food to eke out the meager living the Dexters were able to wrest from their small patch of land. In spite of the rigors of his life, Jody's father had a deep love for the scrub and a sensitiveness toward the wild creatures of the forest which prompted him to kill only when the family needed food or when marauding beasts threatened his crops. Jody had inherited his father's love of nature and the two were boon companions, hunting and fishing together, closer to each other than to Mrs. Baxter, a grim faced unimaginative individual, soured by the hard life they lived. The story takes the reader through one year with the Baxters. One lives with them through the pursuit of Slewfoot, the vicious, theiving bear; the great storm, with its aftermath of flood and pestilence; the attack of the famished wolves upon the Baxter's enclosure; the occasional exciting trips to the nearest town. One watches

Jody grow in endurance, in resourcefulness, and emotionally. The core of the story is, however, Jody's affection for his tame fawn, Flagg, whom he had acquired when the animal was still too young and feeble to walk. Jody and the fawn became inseperable, and, in his enjoyment of his pet, Jody did not see that the fawn was becoming troublesome and wild. Penny Baxter was patient with the animal until it, for the second time, destroyed the crop of young corn. His corn crop being more important than even his son's affection for the pet, it was necessary that the fawn die. Jody, heartbroken, ran away from home, but returned forlorn and humbled, realizing that his father acted as he must. He had learned to face sorrow an inescapable necessity; he had grown up.

The virtue of the book lies in the quality of Mrs. Rawlings' writing which enables her to make so much of simple homely events, and in the closeness and reality with which the characters are portrayed. It is predicted that when adults have finished with it the book will find a permanent place in adolescent libraries[1] and that Jody will take his place as an immortal literary character along with Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer.[2] Its popularity was long lived, as current books of fiction go, and it appeared again on the best seller list for nineteen thirty-nine in seventh place.

[1]"Scrub Idyl," Time, XXXI (April 4, 1938) 69

[2]William Soskin, "A Tom Sawyer of the Florica Scrubland," Herald Tribune-Books, (April 3, 1938) p1.

In the third place book, My Son, My Son, Howard Spring has written a biographical novel covering the last half century in England and telling the life story of two men, who rose from humble beginnings to wealth and of their sons, who were born on the same day, in whom each hoped to realize what had been denied him in his youth. For William Essex childhood had been poverty, toil and unlovely home life, and as a successful novelist, he wished to bestow upon his son, Oliver, the luxuries and indulgences his own youth had lacked. Dermot O'Reardon, whose fanatical bitterness against England and devotion to Ireland had been sublimated in the achievement of success as a furniture designer and interior decorator, dedicated his son, Rory, to the cause which he had abandoned. Both boys met violent death; Rory was ironically killed during the struggles in Ireland by his boyhood friend Oliver doing his duty for England, and Oliver later was hanged for murder committed incident to a petty theft.

The book is a very readable, although distinctly romantic in flavor, in spite of some scenes drawn directly from life, and although it is too patently motivated to demonstrate that too much and too blind a paternal passion leads inevitably to disaster.

The story of the powerful influence a dead wife exerts on her husband, his second wife, the servants, and the neighbors is told in Rebecca. The heroine, and narrator of the story, is the second wife whose Christian name the reader never learns. She was a very surprised person when, after a

brief courtship, Maxim deWinter married her. He had told her a good deal about the history of his famed estate, Mandelay, but she was totally unprepared for the beauty of the place and for the force of the tradition in which it was steeped. She had scarcely recovered from her first feeling of awe which the impact of the place cast over her when she discovered that the menagé was ruled by an autocratic housekeeper who was loyally devoted to the memory of her dead mistress. The second Mrs. de Winter had neither the knowledge nor the courage with which to oppose her. Everywhere she turned the memory of Rebecca haunted her. If she conquered one specter another took its place. The outlook grew increasingly unendurable and to add to her misery Maxim became each day less and less the gay, carefree, lovable person he had been when she first met him.

Little by little it developed that Rebecca's beauty and charm concealed a life of mystery and intrigue. Maxim had been carrying the burden of her death, which had appeared to be accidental, but which he knew to be murder, for he had committed it, and when the net of circumstances closed in to snare him in its meshes, he confessed his crime to his second wife. Additional information was disclosed, however, which absolved him of murder, and this coupled with the burning of Mandelay by the fanatical housekeeper and in which she lost her life, broke the spell which Rebecca had cast over the lives of most of those persons with whom she had been associated as well as a few who had never seen her.

In spite of elements of sensational romanticism in

the Charlotte Bronte manner and criticisms of mediocrity and melodrama Rebecca became a best seller, taking fourth place on the list for nineteen thirty-eight and continued into nineteen thirty-nine when it sold third on the list. It is an ingeniously written, exciting and engaging story.

1939

The Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck
All This and Heaven Too, Rachel Field
Rebecca, Daphne DuMaurier
Wickford Point, John Marquand
Escape, Ethel Vance

The Grapes of Wrath, which headed the list for nineteen thirty-nine, is the story of the new American nomads, the migrant farmers who have lost their few acres in the Oklahoma dust bowl to the onward march of tractors and foreclosures. It is in particular the story of one family, the Joads who move westward in their perilously loaded and shaky truck to California. To California because they have read the handbills which promise work, and a new chance. There is Tom who is out of prison on parole for killing a man in self-defence; mean, merry, and shameless Grandpa; Al, who thinks principally of women and cars; Uncle John, who deadens his memories with alcohol; Noah, not quite right in the head; pregnant Rose of Sharon; and Ma, stong, tough, and understanding and the mainstay of the family. Casy, the preacher rides with them.

Having reached California at last, though one wonders how they managed to do it, disillusionment overtook them. The handbills which had promised so much were but a ruse to flood the California market with such a surplus of workers that the price of labor would sink to almost nothing. With their money gone, the Joads joined the hordes of starving and homeless who eked out a bare existence in filthy roadside

camps. The California authorities, fearing trouble, broke up these camps, arrested objectors as dangerous reds, drove on all who did not get work, and rode herd on those who did work in the orchards at starvation wages. It is a sad and moving picture of destitution. From all their wanderingsthe Joads learned one thing; that the only people who helped them were others as down and out as themselves. This sense of comradeship fanned the tiny flame of courage which was their only possession. On the six hundred nineteenth page the author ended a sentence and did not go on. One cannot say the story has an ending for the reader is left not knowing what happens to the Joads and the others, a necessary condition of writing about such an immediate situation.

The significance of the novel is twofold; its human value in its affirmation of man's courage in desperation, and its social value in its statement of the problem of the southwestern tenant farmer in a form which brought it to the attention of many who had hitherto been unaware there was a problem or who had looked on it with comparative unconcern.

This book aroused comment nearly equal to that created by Gone With the Wind. Reviewers in greater numbers approved of this book than disapproved, and disapproval was usually tempered with words of praise. One reviewer[1] pointed out that the language, while no doubt that of the people portrayed, by its blasphemy and indecency might obscure the value of the novel to some readers. Another reviewer[2] while voicing his

[1]L.A.S."Flight from the Dust Bowl," Christian Science Monitor, May 6, 1939, p13.

[2]Louis Kronenberger, "Hungry Caravan," Nation, CXLVIII April 15, 1939, 440.

opinion that Mr. Steinbeck's sentimentalism often blurs his insight to the awareness of differences in the values of various human emotions, goes on to say that it is a story that had to be told and a book that must be read. Another reviewer[1] while questioning that it was a work of genius, as had been claimed by its publishers, conceded that the point is of small matter; what is more important is that in this book, neither political nor dogmatic in nature, the terrible facts of a wholesale injustice committed by society on a people are dramatized so one can not forget them. Another reviewer,[2] while not liking Mr. Steinbeck's manner of writing, states that the book is good and that wide popularity would be a beneficial thing. From these reviews in which criticism is balanced by approval comments ascend a rising scale of commendation. The book's popularity continued and in nineteen forty it was still selling eighth on the best seller list.

As a book which can interpret what is going on in this country among the kind of people of whom book readers in general know little it deserves the popularity which it has been accorded, and if it does not live it is not to be regretted for it will have justified its creation and served its purpose. Mr. Steinbeck had appeared eighth on the best seller list in nineteen thirty-eight with a short book, Of Mice and Men.

[1]Clifton Fadiman, "Highway 60," New Yorker, XV (April 15, 1939) 81.

[2]Kate O'Brien, "Fiction," Spectator, CLXIII (September 15, 1939) 386.

All This and Heaven Too, the second place best seller, purports to be based on fact, for its principal character is the author's great-aunt Henriette Desportes. The first part of the book is laid in Paris where Henrietta was governess to the nine dePraslin shildren and the sympathetic friend, some say the mistress, of their father. The Duchess de Praslin, jealous of Henrietta's influence in the household, dismissed her. Shortly afterward the Duchess was murdered. The Duc was suspected of the crime and imprisoned as was also Henrietta. The Duc died of self-administered poison and eventually, after a stormy and arduous trial Henrietta was released. The latter part of the story is concerned with Henrietta's life in America where she became a French teacher in a New York girl's school, and eventually married Henry Field, a New England clergyman ten years her junior.

Was it as an antidote to the strong realism and vivid presentation of a present day problem in Grapes of Wrath that people turned to a book romantically written in the Elsie Dinsmore tradition, and which has been so aptly described as "a pleasant, carefully written period piece, sweetly and nicely remote, and maybe a little irrelevant in these days in being guiltless of issues that touch our minds and hearts?"[1]

Wickford Point, in fourth place, is a family chronicle depicting life in the old Brill homestead at Wickford Point, somewhere north of Boston. The Brills were a self-

[1]Clifton Fadiman, "Books," New Yorker XIV (October 29, 1938) 63.

satisfied but inefficient family, the membersof which excused its mistakes in the present by reminding themselves and others of its past glory. The family has a thousand counterparts the land around, thus the story transcends its locale. The story of this family is told by a cousin, Jam Calder. There was Clothide, fragile, beautiful and perpetually confused, particularly about money. There is Harry who went to Harvard (it might just as well have been Yale or Stanford) and met all the best people but couldn't get a job. There was Sidney who neither went to Harvard or anywhere else nor had a job. There was Mary, dreamy and often ill-tempered because Bella put it over on her continuously and took away her beaux out of pure maliciousness. Finally there was Bella, whose name could well have been Becky Sharp, so like her was she. Yet there was a certain pathetic quality about Bella; she did struggle to get out from under the Brill tradition and psychology but didn't know how to do it effectively. She should have married Avory Gifford, heir to millions, and nearly wrecked his subsequent marriage when she later tried to rectify her error. She did marry Joe Stowe, but could not wait for him to become the successful author he did become. Joe was always obsessed by Bella, however, and was about to wreck his career and take her back when she sought escape again. She tried to use Howard Berg, a pseudo "big shot" in Wall Street as an avenue of escape but that scheme fell through. She would have like to have used Jim Calder, but he had always seen through her motives and

forestalled her attempts. She finally ceased to struggle, and when the story closes she had cast herself upon Allen Southby. Southby was a Harvard housemaster, by way of Minnesota, who affected just the right kind of tweeds, just the right kind of tobacco and who read poetry aloud with just the right inflection. His literary aspirations prompted him to attempt a novel about Wickford Point based on the tradition which had for so many years supported the Brills. He prevailed upon Calder to take him to visit Wickford Point, and he became enchanted with the family and with Bella and humbly accepted the privilege of responsibility for them. Jam Calder was then free to lead his own life, a thing which he had been reluctant to do while it necessitated leaving the family without a responsible guardian.

Mr. Marquand was subjected to flaying criticism for his serialization of the book. There are those who aver that a book cannot amount to very much which can be so much of a success as a serial. These critics imply that writing for magazines and writing serious fiction are not one and the same thing and that Mr. Marquand's attempt to do both with this book found him wanting on the side of serious fiction. On the other hand, there are those who maintain it is an important novel, of social significance in its satirical portrayal of a changing order, which was brutally maimed in the serial version.

It would seem, however, that in addition to its

appeal as a humorous satire of a family gone to seed, the deep reading of character which Mr. Marquand has displayed and which lays emphasis upon the workings of human behavior gives this novel importance.

During the last years of the decade Nazism and the turn of events in Germany were very much in the forefront of public interests. There were numerous magazine and newspaper articles and not a few books centered around the German situation and its ramifications. Many of such books were classed as non-fiction, for they were often straightforward reporting. Others used a fiction style but purported to be based on actual events. Escape, in fifth place for the year, is such a book.

The plot revolves around Emmy Ritter, an actress who in her youth was one of Germany's stage idols. For years, however, she had lived in America and in latter years had been acting as an agent for anti-Nazi propaganda. Returning to Germany on a business matter she was arrested, tried for treason, and condemned. She fell ill while in the concentration camp in which she awaited her execution. It seemed apparent that her son, Mark Preysing, arriving from America in response to a frantic appeal from his mother, would be able to do little for her. The extent and ramifications of the Nazi regime blocked his every attempt to aid her. Through a happy accident he met the young doctor who was caring for his mother and who in his youth worshiped her from afar. The doctor planned a daring escape from the concentration camp which succeeded, but

the matter of caring for Emmy until she could safely cross the frontier presented further difficulties. Mark turned for help to an American born Countess with whom, although she was a contemporary of his mother's in age, he was more than half in love. For years, however, the Countess had been the mistress of a Nazi general and this association complicated the problem of taking care of Emmy. She did, however, get through safely.

In the midst of so much writing of Germany given over to lurid details and a crusading indignation this story in which the words Germany, Hitler, Nazi are never used directly, in which specific scenes are never localized, and in which recent issues are avoided seemed a little remote at the time it was published. Its background had the same air of veracity but the tone of it was different, the story was more concerned with what happened to the inner lives of the characters than in the violence to which they were exposed.

Reviewers varied in their opinion of the book from the one[1] who likened it to a whirlwind paper covered story to the one[2] who felt it was raised above the level of a mere exciting story by its concern for normal people involved in a very real and immediate crisis. Its success was doubtless due to its topical interest appeal expressed through the medium of a fast moving story, which although readers may have failed to believe they none the less enjoyed reading.

[1]Anthony West, New Statesman and Nation, XVIII (November 11, 1939) 682

[2]Iris Barry, "Something More Precious than Life," Herald Tribune-Books, (September 24, 1939) p5

a fast moving story, which although readers may have failed to believe, they none the less enjoyed reading.

CHAPTER XV

SUMMARY

These then were the leading fiction best sellers of the thirties. As one recalls them again to mind, it would seem that there had been great range in the popular reading of the period. There had been fiction ranging all the way from light romance to solid philosophical dissertation. In between there had been romance of a more substantial sort, some historical in nature; historical novels cleaving closely to fact; novels of social change; regional novels; novels of character deliniation; novels of picaresque adventure; sentimental novels; novels seeking faith; and novels probing man's inner life. A varied fare indeed!

Some were read for their stories, some for their characterizations, some for their style and some for extraneous reasons quite apart from the essence of the book itself. What motive or motives prompted each reader? So many and varied and so personal are the motives which prompt the reading of a book that the answer could be determined only by a survey of all readers of these best sellers.

Does the popular fiction of the decade deserve the severe disapprobation in which it is held by many? There is evidence other than one's own opinion that it does not. V. Sackville West[1] in nineteen thirty declared that the standard

[1]V. Sackville West, "The Future of the Novel," Bookman, LXXII (December, 1930) 350-1.

in fiction was astonishingly high and that there were many novelists at work whose work was thoroughly competent, decent, sincere, ingenious, and readable.

Frederick Lewis Allen,[1] as a result of a survey of best sellers of nineteen hundred thirty-five, came to the conclusion that there has been a marked gain in substance and in average quality among best selling books which in turn presumably would imply a gain in intellectual maturity among book buyers. The conclusions he made in mid-decade seem to be borne out in the popular writing of the last years of the decade. A correspondent writing in nineteen thirty-seven to the Saturday of Literature comments that he has observed the good taste of the public in the past few years as shown in the best seller list.[2]

Carl Van Doren[3] sees the period beginning with Dreiser and including Sinclair Lewis, Thornton Wilder, Willa Cather, and Thomas Wolfe as the third outstanding period in the history of the American novel. The fact that the last four of these authors were found on best seller lists is indicative that good writing is finding popular favor.

William Rose Benet[4] surveying fiction in America is

[1]Frederick Lewis Allen, "Best Sellers: 1900-1935," Saturday Review of Literature, XIII (December 7, 1935) 3-4.

[2]Saturday Review of Literature, XV (March 6, 1937) 8.

[3]Carl Van Doren, "The Nation' and the American Novel," The Nation, CL (February 10, 1940) 212.

[4]William Rose Benet, "Fiction in American," Saturday Review of Literature, XXIV (November 22, 1941) 112.

able to see that more and more we are becoming able to distinguish and discriminate and feels that if an increase can be made in the appreciateive and cultural virtues which have been acquired of late years "we shan't come off so badly."

What of the books themselves? Looking back at the decade which has so recently closed can one make an evaluation? Was any considerable part of popular fiction of the decade fine literature of lasting significance?

The evaluation of literature follows a recognized pattern in three stages. First, there is its immediate reception, either of welcoming appreciation, or of dissent, or of a mixture of both. Following this is an inevitable wave of devaluation, which is succeeded by a reappraisal at a later date when the tumult of a particular era has subsided and its innovations have wither been discarded or have become a part of the way of life and for a long enough period of time to afford adequate perspective. Thus, the characteristic literature of one decade does not appear until the next. One must look at the fiction of the present not with an intent to appraise but rather to observe; to discover where and in what degree it is notable as an expression of the life of the times; its experiences, moods, and its responses to forces operating on it. Such an observation reveals a change in our literature when compared to earlier periods. It discloses a closer contact between literature and the life problems of the times, a greater relevance to environment and an increase in the authentic portrayal of forces bearing on people. In such

respects there has been a substantial gain.

If one were, however, to award percentages for the qualities in a novel on the basis of narrative gift, imagination, entertainment quality, form, style, character drawing, observation, a sense of reality, and the faithful depicting of experience one would find best sellers rank high in the first three qualities and relatively low in the last three. Nevertheless in the total of all qualities one would find best sellerssurpass in merit all but the rare novel or two by the really gifted writers.

The records seem to indicate that there has been best seller fiction produced during the decade which is lively, interesting, and skillful, but if few books prove truly distinguished it may be attributed to the fact that during most of the decade the current happenings were of such momentous proportions that anything which literature could produce, except a work of genius, would seem insignificant by contrast. In such a period the novelist who is a romantic turns to history, fantasy, or the individual; the novelist who is a realist buckles on his harness and sets forth to meet the issues of the day foursquare. The latter is, however, handicapped in that he cannot view the events of the times with detachment. He is too near to them, too much a part of them to achieve that clarity of mood which is requisite to great writing. Readers themselves afe too much a part of the present to judge clearly the values which may be inherent in the writings of our current authors. Time alone can award the accolade of

greatness.

Perhaps it is not necessary, however, to use the test of time to give validity to our popular fiction.

> "Immortality does not consist in being read by posterity. We must give up such an illusion. The future shall not read us. This we know and rejoice. So much the better for the future. We shall have led posterity beyond the need of reading us."

[1]Albert Guerard, "The Prospect for American Literature," Publishers Weekly, CXXIX (February 1, 1936) 593-8.

An Abstract

This study is undertaken for the purpose of discovering what factors have influenced the taste and trends of best seller fiction of the decade nineteen thirty to nineteen thirty-nine inclusive.

In pursuing this study the first step was an examination of the nature of best seller lists; and, secondly, a survey of the literature concerning best seller fiction in order to determine the extraneous factors which influence the appearance and position of a book on such a list. Next, a brief review was made of the social, economic, and political aspects of the decade in order to discover what factors inherent in the background of the decade may have exerted an influence on the best seller fiction of the period. Then a survey was made of the trends in literature throughout the decade, with special attention to fiction, in order to determine how and to what extent the popular fiction of the decade was influenced by the dominant literary trends of the period. Lastly, an examination was made of the five leading best sellers for each year of the decade for the purpose of revealing the factors intrinsic in the books themselves which influenced their selection as the decade's most popular fiction.

The data on which this study is based consists largely of the discussions of the various aspects of best sellers by authors, editors, critics, and reviewers as

reported in the newspapers and literary periodicals of the decade. A relatively small amount of material reviewing the literary aspects of the decade has been published since its close and whenever such material has been pertinent it has been used. The review of the social, economic and political background is based on competent authority.

The findings of the study indicate that

(1) the whole subject of popular fiction is of a constantly recurring and controversial nature.

(2) best seller lists were in disrepute at the beginning of the decade but that reforms have since been effected in compiling them which have made them more reliable.

(3) there are many extraneous factors which influence the appearance and position of a volume on a fiction best seller list.

(4) of these extraneous factors the influence of editors and professional reviewers appears to be strong and has aroused much discussion.

(5) a literary cleavage has taken place which leaves popular fiction in the position of being disdained by one group as mediocre or less and by another as being an escape from the vital issues of the times.

(6) the social, economic, and political back-

ground of the decade has been one of depression and startling changes and in which the dominant note has been fear--- fear of economic insecurity and fear that the familiar pattern of the American way of life would be irrevocably altered.

(7) the element of fear is reflected in the popular literature of the decade.

(8) certain literary trends are discernable in the popular fiction of the decade; namely, the novel with no central character, the novel of family life through more than one generation, the predominance of the South in the field of regional novels, and the proletarian novel.

(9) the general level of merit of popular fiction is relatively high and seems to be gaining with the years.

(10) the decade was too chaotic and is still too near to be able with any degree of validity to predict which books will have a lasting significance.

(11) many of the popular books of the decade, although they may not have a lasting significance and although they may be lacking in the finer technical qualities, do have validity in that they serve to reveal, develop, and emphasize themes which are vivid for the

moment, though they may eventually pass on, and serve to expand experience, which after all is a primary function of fiction.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Periodicals

America

LV (July 25, 1936) 382

Atlantic Monthly

Curtiss, Philip. " Lost: The Gentle Reader", CLIII June, 1934)673-80

Devoto, Bernard. " American Novels, 1939", CLXV (January, 1940) 66-74

Fuller, Richard B. " A Bookseller Counts His Books", CLIX (January, 1937) 58-60

Gay, R.M. CLVII (June, 1936) Bookshelf

Mumford, Lewis. " What Has 1932 Done for Literature?" CL (December, 1932) 761-7

Thielen, Benedict. CLX (September, 1937) Bookshelf

Williams, Ben Ames. CLX (August, 1937) Bookshelf

Bookman

Holt, Guy. " Fledgling Fiction ", LXXII (September, 1930) xvi

West, V. Sackville. " The Future of the Novel", LXXII (September, 1930) 350-1

Canadian Forum

Mackay, L.A. " And So-Victoria", XVII (September,1937) 213

Catholic World

Gleason, Arthur. " Distorted Standards", CXL (February, 1935) 577-82

Kent, Michael. " Pigs Prefer Corn", CLV (August, 1942) 585-9

CXXXV (May, 1932) 253

CXXXVII (August, 1933) 624

CXLIX (May, 1939) 251

Christian Century

XLVIII (September 23, 1931) 1179

Commonweal

Stone, Geoffrey. " A Large Fiction", XVIII (September, 1933) 430.

" Misty Platonism " XXIV (June 26, 1936) 247

Fortnightly Review

Walpole, Hugh. "Tendencies of the Modern Novel" CXL (October, 1933) 407-15.

Fortune

"Fortune Quarterly Survey V" XIV (July, 1936) 83-4
"Fortune Quarterly Survey VIII" XV (April, 1937) 188

Forum

Colum, Mary. "How Trivial are Modern Books?" XC (November, 1933) 265-9
"Life and Literature," C (October, 1938) 163

Harpers

Allen, Frederick Lewis. "Since Yesterday-The Social Climate of the 1930's) CLXXIX (November, 1939) 610-18, CLXXX (December, 1939 41-9, CLXXX (January, 1940) 177-185

Fiske, Irving. "Where Does Television Belong?" CLXXX (February, 1940) 265-69.

Stenger, Wallace. "Is the Novel Done For?" CLXXXVI (December, 1942) 76-83

Library Journal

Hutchings, Winifred. "Some Fiction of the Past Year" LXI (November 15, 1936) 863-7
"Trends in Modern Fiction"
LX (July, 1935) 556-61

Creighton, Mrs. John. "The Envious Angel," LXVI (April, 1941) 285-90

Literary Digest

CXII (February 6, 1932) 19

CXVII (January 20, 1934) 18

Nation

Codman, Florence. "Fiction Imports," CXXVIII (November 22, 1933) 601

Hazlett, Henry. "Standards (Loud Cheers)" CXXXI (December 3, 1930) 613-14

Kronenberger, Louis. "Hungry Caravan," CXLVIII (April 15, 1939) 440

Krutch, Joseph Wood. "Are Novels Worth Reading?" CXL (February 13, 1935) 188-89

Lozare, Christopher. "History and Case History," CXLV (July 24, 1937) 106.

McCarthy, Mary. "The Old South," CXXXIX (August 8, 1934) 167

Phillips, William. "Gone With Anthony Adverse," CXLV (July 31, 1937) 155

Scott, Evelyn. "War Between the States," CXLIII (July 4, 1936) 19

Van Doren, Carl. "The Nation and the American Novel," CL (February 10, 1940) 212

Van Doren, Dorothy. "A Pioneer Fairy Story," CXXX (April 23, 1930) 494
"Twelve Hundred Pages Long," CXXXVII (July 26, 1933) 108

Strachey, Richard. "Mainly American," Nation and Athenium, XLVIII (November 1, 1930) 169

New Republic

Aiken, Conrad. "The New England Animal," LXXXV (February 5, 1936) 372

Cowley, Malcolm. "A Farewell to the 1930's," CI (November 8, 1939) 42-44.
"Going With the Wind," LXXXVIII (September 16, 1936) 161

Fadiman, Clifton. "Ellen Glasgow's South," LXXII (August 31, 1932) 79

Kang, Younghill. "China is Different," LXVII (July 1, 1931) 185

Matthews, T.S. "Fiction vs. Blurbs," LXXVI (September 20, 1933) 164
"The Writing Game;" XCVIII (March 29, 1939) 308

Preston, John Hyde. LXXXVIII (August 26, 1936) 82

Young, Stark. "Ellen Glasgow's New Book," LXXXIV (September 11, 1935) 133

G. H. T. LXII (April 30, 1930) 308

New Statesman and Nation

Pritchett, V.S. "New Novels," V (June 24, 1933) 850

Quennell, Peter. "New Novels," XII (October 3, 1936) 474

West, Anthony. XVIII (November 11, 1939) 682

New Yorker

Erskine, John CCXLI (June, 1936) 349

Field, Louise Maunsell, "What's Wrong with the Men?" CCXXXI (March, 1931) 234-40

Outlook, CLVIII (August 26, 1931) 538

Publishers Weekly

Derieth, August. "America in Today's Fiction," CXXXIX (May 3, 1941) 1820-5

Guerard, Albert. "Makers of Literature," CXV (April 27, 1939) 1997-2000

"The Prospects for American Literature," CXXIX (February 1, 1936) 593-8

Hansen, Harry. "The First Reader," CXXIII (January 21, 1933) 185-6

"The First Reader," CXXVII (January 19, 1935) 201-2

"The First Reader," CXXIX (January 18, 1936) 199-201

Hart, Irving Harlow. "Best Sellers in Non-Fiction Since 1921," CXXIII (February 4, 1933) 524-8

Loveman, Amy. "Some Trends in Current American Fiction" CXLI (May 30, 1942) 1964-66

"Mr. Priestly on Best Sellers," CXXV (March 24, 1934) 1212-13

CXXXVI (December 9, 1939) 2134

Review of Reviews

Hershel, Brickell. "The Literary Landscape," XCIII (March, 1936) 17

"The Literary Landscape," XCIV (August, 1936) 8

The Saturday Evening Post

Goodman, A. and Rice, Albert. "Big Books - the Story of Best Sellers," CCVII (November 17, 1934) 31f

Seldes, Albert. "Over the Tops," CCVIII (April 25, 1936) 31f

Saturday Review, CLXI (April 25, 1936) 535

Saturday Review of Literature

Allen, Frederick Lewis. "Best Sellers; 1900-1935," XIII (December 7, 1935) 3f

Banning, Margaret Culkins. "The Problems of Popularity," XIV (May 2, 1936) 3-4

Benet, William Rose. "Fiction in America," XXIV (November 22, 1941) 112

"Georgia Marches Through," XIV (July 4, 1936) 5

Bentley, Phyllis. "I Look at American Fiction," XX (May 13, 1939) 3f

Canby, Henry Seidel. "Best Sellers Under Fire," XXI (December 16, 1939) 8
"Reading for Life," VIII (September 26, 1931) 145-6
"The Education of a Puritan," XIII (February 1, 1936) 3
"The Effect of the War on Literature," XX (September 16, 1939) 8
"The River of Youth," Xi (March 9, 1935) 529
"The Threatening Thirties," XVI (May 22, 1937) 3f
"Youth and Age," IX (August 27, 1932) 63

Colum, Mary. "The Changing Novel," V (June 1, 1929) 1070-1

Dodd, Lee Wilson. "Our World in Epitome," VII (September 20, 1930) 137

Gerould, Katherine Fullerton. "Feminine Fiction," XIII (April 11, 1936) 3-4

Hicks, Granville. "The Fighting Decade," XXII (July 6, 1940) 3f

Muller, Herbert. "Virginia Woolf and Feminine Fiction,"

Nevins, Albert. "War in the Mohawk Valley," XIV (August 1, 1936) 5

Purdy, Theodore Jr. "Mad, Bad Hanovers," XVI (July 31, 1937) 5

Redman, Ben Ray. "A Full Blooded World," IX (July 1, 1933) 673

Smertenko, Johan J. "What Makes Popularity," V (April 20, 1929) 918

Uzzell, Thomas H. "Mob Reading-Romantic Ingredients of the Super Best Seller," XVII (November 20, 1937) 3f

Vestal, Stanley. "Miss Ferber's Myth," VI (March 22, 1930) 841

Woodbridge, Homer. "The Last of the Cherells," X (October 8, 1933) 159

"C + Fiction," XVII (January 29, 1930) 8
"In the Deeping Tradition," VI (March 22, 1930) 841
"One Function of Fiction," VIII (August, 1931) 17f
"The Bonnie Blue Flag," XV (March 6, 1937) 8
"The Central Problem," XX (October 29, 1938) 8

Scribners

Rosenbaum, Belle, "Why Do They Read It?" CII (August, 1937) 23-4

Scholastic

Duffus, R. L. "America Has A. Book," XXXI (November 20, 1937) 11

Social Studies
Hall, Courtney R., XXVI (January, 1935) 64

Spectator
O'Brien, Kate. "Fiction," CLXIII (September 15, 1939) 386

O'Faolain, Sean. "Fiction," CLV (August 23, 1935) 300
CLVI (April 3, 1936) 632

Survey Graphic
Dewey, Edward Hooker. "The Storm and Stress Period," XXIV (May, 1935) 255

Time
XXXI (March 7, 1938) 74-5
XXXI (May 16, 1938) 75

Yale Review
Buck, Pearl. "Fiction and the Front Page," XXV (March, 1936) 477-87

MacAfee, Helen. "Outstanding Novels," XXV (Summer 1936) x
XXII (Autumn, 1935) viii

Newspapers

Boston Transcript
Edgett, Edwin Francis. "Why Victoria Might Never Have Reigned," July 31, 1937 p1

Harris, William E. "Twelve Hundred Pages of Anthony Adverse," July 1, 1933, p1

B.R.B.R. "Three Generations in Nebraska," September 2, 1931, p2

Chicago Daily Tribune, August 4, 1934, p6

Christian Science Monitor
L. A. S. "Flight From the Dust Bowl," May 6, 1939 p13

New York Evening Post, January 19, 1932, p1

New York Evening Post, March 9, 1935, p7

New York Herald Tribune-Books
Barry, Iris. "Gorgeous, Glamorous Tissue of Tales," August 1, 1937. p3
"Something More Precious than Life," September 24, 1939, p5

Benet, Stephen Vincent. "A Story Teller Who Makes Our Ancestors Live," August 2, 1936, p1

Commoger, Henry Steele. "The Civil War in Georgia's Red Clay Hills," July 5, 1936, p1

Glasgow, Ellen. "A Memorable Novel of the old Deep South," July 22, 1934, p1
"George Santayana Writes a Novel," February 2, 1936, p1

Soskin, William. "A Tom Sawyer of the Florida Scrubland," April 5, 1938, p1

Van Doren, Carl. "Willa Cather's New Chronicle of Virtue," August 2, 1931, p1

New York Times

July 19, 1932, p15.
April 28, 1936, p21.

New York Times Book Review

Adams, J. Donald. "The South and the Civil War," August 5, 1934, p1

Jack, Peter Monro. "A Novel of Romantic Adventure," August 1, 1937, p6
"A Titanic Novel of Adventure," June 25, 1933, p1
"Galsworthy's Last Novel Closes the Forsyte Chronicle," October 8, 1933, p3
"In the Romantic Tradition," March 2, 1930, p19
"On to Happiness," March 17, 1935, p20

New York World, February 2, 1931, p13

Springfield Republican

"A Maine Village," June 11, 1933 p7e
"One More River," October 8, 1933, p7e
"Sparkenbroke," May 5, 1936, p7e

Times (London) Literary Supplement

XXXIII (January 4, 1934) 10
XXXIII (November 22, 1934) 826

Books

American Now: An Inquiry into Civilization in the United States" Harold Stearns, editor. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938)

Beach, Joseph Warren. "American Fiction, 1920-1940" (New York: Macmillan Company, 1941)

Economic Survey of the Book Industry, 1930-1931," Orin B. Cheney, director, (New York: National Association of Book Publishers, 1931)

Gerould, Gordon Hall. "The Patterns of English and American Fiction," (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1942)

Kazin, Alfred, "On Native Grounds," (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1942)

Leavis, Queenie, "Fiction and the Reading Public," (London: Chotto and Winders, 1932)

Luccock, Halford E. "American Mirror," (New York: Macmillan Company, 1941)

Lynd, Robert S. and Helen M. "Middletown in Transition," (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1937)

Orage, A.R. "The Art of Reading," (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, incorporated, 1930)

MacLeish, Archibald. "Land of the Free," (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1938)

Spengler, Oswald. "Decline of the West," (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1939)

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
1 1719 02481 4388

ACCOPRESS BINDER

BFS 250-P7 EMB.

MANUFACTURED BY
ACCO PRODUCTS, INC.
LONG ISLAND CITY, N. Y., U. S. A.